Szr. Rajál 1822.

THE

PARENT'S ASSISTANT;

OR,

STORIES FOR CHILDREN.

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

498

VOL. III.

3

CONTAINING

THE BRACELETS,

THE LITTLE MERCHANTS.

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR R. HUNTER,

SUCCESSOR TO THE LATE J. JOHNSON;

AND BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1817.

Printed by S. Hamilton, Weybridge, Surrey.

THE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL. THE TANJORE
498

THE BRACELETS.

In a beautiful and retired part of England lived Mrs. Villars; a lady whose accurate understanding, benevolent heart, and steady temper, peculiarly fitted her for the most difficult, as well as most important of all occupations—the education of youth. This task she had undertaken; and twenty young persons were put under her care, with the perfect confidence of their parents. No young people could be happier; they were good and gay, emulous, but not envious of each other; for Mrs. Villars was impartially just; her praise they felt to be the reward of merit, and her blame they knew to be the necessary consequence

of ill-conduct: to the one, therefore, they patiently submitted, and in the other consciously rejoiced. They rose with fresh cheerfulness in the morning, eager to pursue their various occupations; they returned in the evening with renewed ardour to their amusements, and retired to rest satisfied with themselves, and pleased with each other.

Nothing so much contributed to preserve a spirit of emulation in this little society as a small honorary distinction, given annually, as the prize of successful application. The prize this year was peculiarly dear to each individual, as it was the picture of a friend whom they all dearly loved—it was the picture of Mrs. Villars in a small bracelet. It wanted neither gold, pearls, nor precious stones, to give it value.

.0111, 3EDG, P
.A17·3

The two foremost candidates for this prize were Cecilia and Leonora. Cecilia was the most intimate friend of Leonora, but Leonora was only the favourite companion of Cecilia.

Cecilia was of an active, ambitious, enterprising disposition; more eager in the pursuit, than happy in the enjoyment of her wishes. Leonora was of a contented, unaspiring, temperate character; not easily roused to action, but indefatigable when once excited. Leonora was proud, Cecilia was vain: her vanity made her more dependent upon the approbation of others, and therefore more anxious to please than Leonora; but that very vanity made her, at the same time, more apt to offend: in short, Leonora was the most anxious to avoid what was wrong, Cecilia the most ambitious to do what was right.

Few of their companions loved, but many were led by Cecilia, for she was often successful; many loved Leonora, but none were ever governed by her, for she was too indolent to govern.

On the first day of May, about six o'clock in the evening, a great bell rang, to summon this little society into a hall, where the prize was to be decided. A number of small tables were placed in a circle in the middle of the hall; seats for the young competitors were raised one above another, in a semicircle, some yards distant from the table; and the judges' chairs, under canopies of lilacs and laburnums, forming another semicircle, closed the amphitheatre. Every one put their writings, their drawings, their works of various kinds, upon the tables appropriated for each. How unsteady were the last steps to these tables! How

each little hand trembled as it laid down its claims! Till this moment every one thought herself secure of success, but now each felt an equal certainty of being excelled; and the heart which a few minutes before exulted with hope, now palpitated with fear.

The works were examined, the preference adjudged; and the prize was declared to be the happy Cecilia's. Mrs. Villars came forward smiling with the bracelet in her hand: Cecilia was behind her companions, on the highest row; all the others gave way, and she was on the floor in an instant. Mrs. Villars clasped the bracelet on her arm; the clasp was heard through the whole hall, and an universal smile of congratulation followed. Mrs. Villars kissed Cecilia's little hand; and, "Now," said she, "go and rejoice with your compa-

nions; the remainder of the day is yours."

Oh! you whose hearts are elated with success, whose bosoms beat high with joy, in the moment of triumph, command yourselves: let that triumph be moderate, that it may be lasting. Consider, that though you are good, you may be better; and though wise, you may be weak.

As soon as Mrs. Villars had given her the bracelet, all Cecilia's little companions crowded round her, and they all left the hall in an instant; she was full of spirits and vanity—she ran on: running down the flight of steps which led to the garden, in her violent haste, Cecilia threw down the little Louisa. Louisa had a china mandarin in her hand, which her mother had sent her that very morning; it was all broken to pieces by her fall.

"Oh! my mandarin!" cried Louisa, bursting into tears. The crowd behind Cecilia suddenly stopped: Louisa sat on the lowest step, fixing her eyes upon the broken pieces; then turning round, she hid her face in her hands upon the step above her. In turning, Louisa threw down the remains of the mandarin; the head, which she had placed in the socket, fell from the shoulders, and rolled bounding along the gravel walk. Cecilia pointed to the head, and to the socket, and burst out a laughing: the crowd behind laughed too. At any other time they would have been more inclined to cry with Louisa; but Cecilia had just been successful, and sympathy with the victorious often makes us forget justice. Leonora, however, preserved her usual consistency. "Poor Louisa!" said she, looking first at her,

and then reproachfully at Cecilia. Cecilia turned sharply round, colouring, half with shame and half with vexation; "I could not help it, Leonora," said she.

"But you could have helped laughing, Cecilia."

"I didn't laugh at Louisa; and I surely may laugh, for it does nobody any harm."

"I am sure, however," replied Leonora, "I should not have laughed if I had——"

"No, to be sure you wouldn't, because Louisa is your favourite; I can buy her another mandarin the next time that the old pedler comes to the door, if that's all.—I *can* do no more—*Can* I?" said she, turning round to her companions.

"No, to be sure," said they, "that's all fair."

Cecilia looked triumphantly at Leonora: Leonora let go her hand; she ran on, and the crowd followed. When she got to the end of the garden, she turned round to see if Leonora had followed her too; but was vexed to see her still sitting on the steps with Louisa. "I'm sure I can do no more than buy her another!—*Can* I?" said she, again appealing to her companions.

"No, to be sure," said they, eager to begin their plays.

How many did they begin and leave off, before Cecilia could be satisfied with any: her thoughts were discomposed, and her mind was running upon something else; no wonder, then, that she did not play with her usual address. She grew still more impatient; she threw down the nine-pins: "Come, let us play at something else—at threading

the needle," said she, holding out her hand. They all yielded to the hand which wore the bracelet. But Cecilia, dissatisfied with herself, was discontented with every body else: her tone grew more and more peremptory.—One was too rude, another too stiff; one too slow, another too quick; in short, every thing went wrong, and every body was tired of her humours.

The triumph of *success* is absolute but short. Cecilia's companions at length recollected, that, though she had embroidered a tulip and painted a peach better than they, yet that they could play as well, and keep their tempers better: she was thrown out.—Walking towards the house in a peevish mood, she met Leonora: she passed on.

"Cecilia!" cried Leonora.

"Well, what do you want with me?"

"Are we friends?"

"You know best."

"We are; if you will let me tell Louisa, that you are sorry———"

Cecilia, interrupting her, "Oh! pray let me hear no more about Louisa!"

"What! not confess that you were in the wrong! Oh, Cecilia! I had a better opinion of you."

"Your opinion is of no consequence to me now; for you don't love me."

"No, not when you are unjust, Cecilia."

"Unjust! I am not unjust: and if I were, you are not my governess."

"No, but am not I your friend?"

"I don't desire to have such a friend, who would quarrel with me for happening to throw down little Louisa—how could I tell that she had a mandarin in her hand? And when it was broken,

could I do more than promise her another?—Was that unjust?"

"But you know, Cecilia——"

"*I know,*" ironically. "I know, Leonora, that you love Louisa better than you do me; that's the injustice!"

"If I did," replied Leonora, gravely, "it would be no injustice, if she deserved it better."

"How can you compare Louisa to me?" exclaimed Cecilia, indignantly.

Leonora made no answer, for she was really hurt at her friend's conduct; she walked on to join the rest of her companions. They were dancing in a round upon the grass: Leonora declined dancing, but they prevailed upon her to sing for them; her voice was not so sprightly, but it was sweeter than usual.—Who sung so sweetly as Leonora? or who danced so nimbly as Louisa?

Away she was flying, all spirits and gaiety, when Leonora's eyes, full of tears, caught hers: Louisa silently let go her companion's hands, and quitting the dance, ran up to Leonora to inquire what was the matter with her.

"Nothing," replied she, "that need interrupt you.—Go, my dear; go and dance again."

Louisa immediately ran away to her garden, and pulling off her little straw hat, she lined it with the freshest strawberry leaves; and was upon her knees before the strawberry-bed when Cecilia came by. Cecilia was not disposed to be pleased with Louisa at that instant, for two reasons; because she was jealous of her, and because she had injured her. The injury, however, Louisa had already forgotten: perhaps, to tell things just as they were, she was not quite so

much inclined to kiss Cecilia as she would have been before the fall of her mandarin, but this was the utmost extent of her malice, if it can be called malice.

"What are you doing there, little one?" said Cecilia, in a sharp tone: "Are you eating your early strawberries here all alone?"

"No," said Louisa, mysteriously; "I am not eating them."

"What are you doing with them? Can't you answer then? I'm not playing with you, child!"

"Oh! as to that, Cecilia, you know I need not answer you unless I choose it: not but what I would, if you would only ask me civilly—and if you would not call me *child*."

"Why should not I call you child?"

"Because—because—I don't know;

but I wish you would stand out of my light, Cecilia, for you are trampling upon all my strawberries."

"I have not touched one, you covetous little creature!"

"Indeed—indeed, Cecilia, I am not covetous; I have not eaten one of them—they are all for your friend Leonora. See how unjust you are!"

"Unjust! that's a cant word you learned of my friend Leonora, as you call her, but she is not my friend now."

"Not your friend now!" exclaimed Louisa; "then I am sure you must have done something *very* naughty."

"How!" said Cecilia catching hold of her.

"Let me go—Let me go!" cried Louisa, struggling; "I won't give you one of my strawberries, for I don't like you at all!"

"You don't, don't you?" said Cecilia, provoked; and catching the hat from Louisa, she flung the strawberries over the hedge.

"Will nobody help me!" exclaimed Louisa, snatching her hat again, and running away with all her force.

"What have I done?" said Cecilia, recollecting herself; "Louisa! Louisa!" She called very loud, but Louisa would not turn back; she was running to her companions.

They were still dancing hand in hand upon the grass, whilst Leonora, sitting in the middle, sang to them.

"Stop! stop! and hear me!" cried Louisa, breaking through them; and rushing up to Leonora, she threw her hat at her feet, and panting for breath—"It was full—almost full of my own strawberries," said she, "the first I ever

got out of my own garden.—They should all have been for you, Leonora, but now I have not one left. They are all gone!" said she, and she hid her face in Leonora's lap.

"Gone! gone where?" said every one, at once running up to her.

"Cecilia! Cecilia!" said she, sobbing.

"Cecilia," repeated Leonora, "what of Cecilia?"

"Yes, it was—it was."

"Come along with me," said Leonora, unwilling to have her friend exposed; "come, and I will get you some more strawberries."

"Oh, I don't mind the strawberries indeed; but I wanted to have had the pleasure of giving them to you."

Leonora took her up in her arms to carry her away, but it was too late.

"What, Cecilia! Cecilia who won the prize!—it could not surely be Cecilia!" whispered every busy tongue.

At this instant the bell summoned them in. "There she is!—There she is!" cried they, pointing to an arbour, where Cecilia was standing ashamed and alone; and as they passed her, some lifted up their hands and eyes with astonishment, others whispered and huddled mysteriously together, as if to avoid her: Leonora walked on, her head a little higher than usual.

"Leonora!" said Cecilia, timorously, as she passed.

"Oh, Cecilia! who would have thought that you had a bad heart?

Cecilia turned her head aside, and burst into tears.

"Oh no, indeed, she has not a bad heart!" cried Louisa, running up to

her, and throwing her arms round her neck; "she's very sorry!—are not you, Cecilia?—But don't cry any more, for I forgive you with all my heart—and I love you now, though I said I did not when I was in a passion."

"Oh, you sweet-tempered girl!—how I love you!" said Cecilia, kissing her.

"Well then, if you do, come along with me, and dry your eyes, for they are so red!"

"Go, my dear, and I'll come presently."

"Then I will keep a place for you next to me; but you must make haste, or you will have to come in when we have all sat down to supper, and then you will be so stared at!—So don't stay now."

Cecilia followed Louisa with her eyes, till she was out of sight—"And is Louisa," said she to herself, "the only

one who would stop to pity me? Mrs. Villars told me that this day should be mine; she little thought how it would end!" Saying these words, Cecilia threw herself down upon the ground; her arm leaned upon a heap of turf which she had raised in the morning, and which, in the pride and gaiety of her heart, she had called her throne.

At this instant Mrs. Villars came out to enjoy the serenity of the evening, and passing by the arbour where Cecilia lay, she started; Cecilia rose hastily.

"Who is there?" said Mrs. Villars.

"It is I, madam."

"And who is *I*?"

"Cecilia."

"Why, what keeps you here, my dear —where are your companions? This is, perhaps, one of the happiest days of your life."

"O! no, madam!" said Cecilia, hardly able to repress her tears.

"Why, my dear, what is the matter?"

Cecilia hesitated.

"Speak, my dear; you know that when I ask you to tell me any thing as your friend, I never punish you as your governess: therefore you need not be afraid to tell me what is the matter."

"No, madam, I am not afraid, but ashamed. You asked me why I was not with my companions? Why, madam, because they have all left me, and——"

"And what, my dear?"

"And I see that they all dislike me, and yet I don't know why they should, for I take as much pains to please as any of them; all my masters seem satisfied with me! and you yourself, ma'am,

were pleased this very morning to give me this bracelet; and I am sure you would not have given it to any one who did not deserve it."

"Certainly not: you did deserve it for your application—for your successful application. The prize was for the most assiduous, not for the most amiable."

"Then if it had been for the most amiable, it would not have been for me?"

Mrs. Villars, smiling—"Why, what do you think yourself, Cecilia? You are better able to judge than I am: I can determine whether or no you apply to what I give you to learn; whether you attend to what I desire you to do, and avoid what I desire you not to do; I know that I like you as a pupil, but I

cannot know that I should like you as a companion, unless I were your companion: therefore I must judge of what I should do, by seeing what others do in the same circumstances."

"Oh, pray don't ma'am! for then you would not love me neither.—And yet I think you would love me; for I hope that I am as ready to oblige, and as good-natured as——"

"Yes, Cecilia, I don't doubt but that you would be very good-natured to me, but I am afraid that I should not like you, unless you were good-tempered too."

"But, ma'am, by good-natured I mean good-tempered—it's all the same thing."

"No, indeed, I understand by them two very different things: you are good-natured, Cecilia, for you are desirous to

oblige, and serve your companions; to gain them praise, and save them from blame; to give them pleasure, and relieve them from pain: but Leonora is good-tempered, for she can bear with their foibles, and acknowledge her own; without disputing about the right, she sometimes yields to those who are in the wrong: in short, her temper is perfectly good, for it can bear and forbear."

"I wish that mine could!" said Cecilia, sighing.

"It may," replied Mrs. Villars, "but it is not wishes alone, which can improve us in any thing: turn the same exertion and perseverance, which have won you the prize to-day, to this object, and you will meet with the same success; perhaps not on the first, the second, or the third attempt, but depend upon it that you will at last: every

new effort will weaken your bad habits, and strengthen your good ones. But you must not expect to succeed all at once: I repeat it to you, for habit must be counteracted by habit. It would be as extravagant in us to expect that all our faults could be destroyed by one punishment, were it ever so severe, as it was in the Roman emperor we were reading of a few days ago, to wish that all the heads of his enemies were upon one neck, that he might cut them off at one blow."

Here Mrs. Villars took Cecilia by the hand, and they began to walk home. Such was the nature of Cecilia's mind, that when any object was forcibly impressed on her imagination, it caused a temporary suspension of her reasoning faculties. Hope was too strong a stimulus for her spirits; and when fear

did take possession of her mind, it was attended with total debility: her vanity was now as much mortified, as in the morning it had been elated. She walked on with Mrs. Villars in silence, until they came under the shade of the elm-tree walk, and then, fixing her eyes upon Mrs. Villars, she stopped short—"Do you think madam," said she, with hesitation, "Do you think, madam, that I have a bad heart?"

"A bad heart, my dear! why what put that into your head?"

"Leonora said that I had, ma'am, and I felt ashamed when she said so."

"But, my dear, how can Leonora tell whether your heart be good or bad? However, in the first place, tell me what you mean by a bad heart."

"Indeed I do not know what is meant by it, ma'am; but it is something which every body hates."

"And why do they hate it?"

"Because they think that it will hurt them, ma'am, I believe: and that those who have bad hearts, take delight in doing mischief; and that they never do any body any good but for their own ends."

"Then the best definition which you can give me of a bad heart is, that it is some constant propensity to hurt others, and to do wrong for the sake of doing wrong."

"Yes, ma'am, but that is not all neither; there is still something else meant; something which I cannot express—which, indeed, I never distinctly understood; but of which, therefore, I was the more afraid."

"Well, then, to begin with what you do understand; tell me, Cecilia, do you really think it possible to be

wicked merely for the love of wickedness? No human being becomes wicked all at once; a man begins by doing wrong because it is, or because he thinks it, for his interest; if he continue to do so, he must conquer his sense of shame, and lose his love of virtue. But how can you, Cecilia, who feel such a strong sense of shame, and such an eager desire to improve, imagine that you have a bad heart?"

"Indeed, madam, I never did, until every body told me so, and then I began to be frightened about it: this very evening, ma'am, when I was in a passion, I threw little Louisa's strawberries away; which, I am sure, I was very sorry for afterwards; and Leonora and every body cried out that I had a bad heart—but I am sure I was only in a passion."

"Very likely.—And when you are in a passion, as you call it, Cecilia, you see that you are tempted to do harm to others: if they do not feel angry themselves, they do not sympathise with you; they do not perceive the motive which actuates you, and then they say that you have a bad heart.—I dare say, however, when your passion is over, and when you recollect yourself, you are very sorry for what you have done and said; are not you?"

"Yes, indeed, madam—very sorry."

"Then make that sorrow of use to you, Cecilia; and fix it steadily in your thoughts, as you hope to be good and happy, that if you suffer yourself to yield to your passion upon every trifling occasion, anger and its consequences will become familiar to your mind; and in the same proportion your sense of shame will

be weakened, till, what you began with doing from sudden impulse, you will end with doing from habit and choice: and then you would indeed, according to our definition, have a bad heart."

"Oh, madam! I hope—I am sure I never shall."

"No, indeed, Cecilia; I do, indeed, believe that you never will; on the contrary, I think that you have a very good disposition; and what is of infinitely more consequence to you, an active desire of improvement: show me that you have as much perseverance as you have candour, and I shall not despair of your becoming every thing that I could wish."

Here Cecilia's countenance brightened, and she ran up the steps in almost as high spirits as she ran down them in the morning.

"Good night to you, Cecilia," said Mrs. Villars, as she was crossing the hall.

"Good night to you, madam," said Cecilia; and she ran up stairs to bed.

She could not go to sleep, but she lay awake, reflecting upon the events of the preceding day, and forming resolutions for the future; at the same time, considering that she had resolved, and resolved without effect, she wished to give her mind some more powerful motive: ambition she knew to be its most powerful incentive.

"Have I not," said she to herself, "already won the prize of application, and cannot the same application procure me a much higher prize?—Mrs. Villars said, that if the prize had been promised to the most amiable, it would not have been given to me: perhaps it

would not yesterday—perhaps it might not to-morrow; but that is no reason that I should despair of ever deserving it."

In consequence of this reasoning Cecilia formed a design of proposing to her companions that they should give a prize, the first of the ensuing month (the first of June) to the most amiable. Mrs. Villars applauded the scheme, and her companions adopted it with the greatest alacrity.

"Let the prize," said they, "be a bracelet of our own hair;" and instantly their shining scissors were produced, and each contributed a lock of their hair. They formed the most beautiful gradation of colours, from the palest auburn to the brightest black. Who was to have the honour of plaiting them, was now the question.

Caroline begged that she might, as she could plait very neatly, she said.

Cecilia, however, was equally sure that she could do it much better; and a dispute would inevitably have ensued, if Cecilia, recollecting herself just as her colour rose to scarlet, had not yielded—yielded, with no very good grace indeed, but as well as could be expected for the first time. For it is habit which confers ease; and without ease, even in moral actions, there can be no grace.

The bracelet was plaited in the neatest manner by Caroline, finished round the edge with silver twist, and on it was worked, in the smallest silver letters, this motto, TO THE MOST AMIABLE. The moment it was completed, every body begged to try it on: it fastened with little silver clasps, and as it was made large

enough for the eldest girls, it was too large for the youngest; of this they bitterly complained, and unanimously entreated that it might be cut to fit them.

"How foolish!" exclaimed Cecilia; "don't you perceive, that if any of you win it, you have nothing to do but to put the clasps a little further from the edge; but, if we get it, we can't make it larger."

"Very true," said they, "but you need not to have called us foolish, Cecilia!"

It was by such hasty and unguarded expressions as these, that Cecilia offended: a slight difference in the manner makes a very material one in the effect; Cecilia lost more love by general petulance, than she could gain by the greatest particular exertions.

How far she succeeded in curing herself of this defect, how far she became deserving of the bracelet, and to whom the bracelet was given, shall be told in the History of the First of June.

CONTINUATION.

THE BRACELETS.

THE first of June was now arrived, and all the young competitors were in a state of the most anxious suspense. Leonora and Cecilia continued to be the foremost candidates; their quarrel had never been finally adjusted, and their different pretensions now retarded all thoughts of a reconciliation. Cecilia, though she was capable of acknowledging any of her faults in public before all her companions, could not humble herself in private to Leonora: Leonora was her equal, they were her inferiors; and submission is much easier to

a vain mind, where it appears to be voluntary, than when it is the necessary tribute to justice or candour. So strongly did Cecilia feel this truth, that she even delayed making any apology, or coming to any explanation with Leonora, until success should once more give her the palm.

If I win the bracelet to-day, said she to herself, I will solicit the return of Leonora's friendship; it will be more valuable to me than even the bracelet; and at such a time, and asked in such a manner, she surely cannot refuse it to me. Animated with this hope of a double triumph, Cecilia canvassed with the most zealous activity: by constant attention and exertion she had considerably abated the violence of her temper, and changed the course of her habits. Her powers of pleasing were now excited, instead

of her abilities to excel; and, if her talents appeared less brilliant, her character was acknowledged to be more amiable; so great an influence upon our manners and conduct have the objects of our ambition.—Cecilia was now, if possible, more than ever desirous of doing what was right, but she had not yet acquired sufficient fear of doing wrong. This was the fundamental error of her mind: it arose in a great measure from her early education.

Her mother died when she was very young; and though her father had supplied her place in the best and kindest manner, he had insensibly infused into his daughter's mind a portion of that enterprising, independent spirit, which he justly deemed essential to the character of her brother: this brother was some years older than Cecilia, but he

had always been the favourite companion of her youth: what her father's precepts inculcated, his example enforced, and even Cecilia's virtues consequently became such as were more estimable in a man, than desirable in a female.

All small objects, and small errors, she had been taught to disregard as trifles; and her impatient disposition was perpetually leading her into more material faults; yet her candour in confessing these, she had been suffered to believe, was sufficient reparation and atonement.

Leonora, on the contrary, who had been educated by her mother in a manner more suited to her sex, had a character and virtues more peculiar to a female: her judgment had been early cultivated, and her good sense employed in the regulation of her conduct; she had

been habituated to that restraint, which, as a woman, she was to expect in life, and early accustomed to yield; compliance in her seemed natural and graceful.

Yet, notwithstanding the gentleness of her temper, she was in reality more independent than Cecilia; she had more reliance upon her own judgment, and more satisfaction in her own approbation: though far from insensible to praise, she was not liable to be misled by the indiscriminate love of admiration: the uniform kindness of her manner, the consistency and equality of her character, had fixed the esteem and passive love of her companions.

By passive love, we mean that species of affection which makes us unwilling to offend, rather than anxious to oblige; which is more a habit than an emotion of

the mind. For Cecilia her companions felt active love, for she was active in showing her love to them.

Active love arises spontaneously in the mind, after feeling particular instances of kindness, without reflection on the past conduct or general character; it exceeds the merits of its object, and is connected with a feeling of generosity, rather than with a sense of justice.

Without determining which species of love is the most flattering to others, we can easily decide which is the most agreeable feeling to our own minds; we give our hearts more credit for being generous than for being just; and we feel more self-complacency when we give our love voluntarily, than when we yield it as a tribute which we cannot withhold. Though Cecilia's companions might not know all this in theory,

they proved it in practice; for they loved her in a much higher proportion to her merits, than they loved Leonora.

Each of the young judges were to signify their choice, by putting a red or a white shell into a vase prepared for the purpose. Cecilia's colour was red, Leonora's white. In the morning nothing was to be seen but these shells, nothing talked of but the long-expected event of the evening. Cecilia, following Leonora's example, had made it a point of honour not to inquire of any individual her vote, previously to their final determination.

They were both sitting together in Louisa's room: Louisa was recovering from the measles: every one during her illness had been desirous of attending her; but Leonora and Cecilia were the only two that were permitted to see

her, as they alone had had the distemper. They were both assiduous in their care of Louisa; but Leonora's want of exertion to overcome any disagreeable feelings of sensibility, often deprived her of presence of mind, and prevented her from being so constantly useful as Cecilia. Cecilia, on the contrary, often made too much noise and bustle with her officious assistance, and was too anxious to invent amusements, and procure comforts for Louisa, without perceiving that illness takes away the power of enjoying them.

As she was sitting in the window in the morning, exerting herself to entertain Louisa, she heard the voice of an old pedler, who often used to come to the house. Down stairs they ran immediately to ask Mrs. Villars's permission to bring him into the hall.

Mrs. Villars consented, and away Cecilia ran to proclaim the news to her companions; then first returning into the hall, she found the pedler just unbuckling his box, and taking it off his shoulders. "What would you be pleased to want, miss?" said he, "I've all kinds of tweezer-cases, rings, and lockets of all sorts," continued he; opening all the glittering drawers successively.

"Oh!" said Cecilia, shutting the drawer of lockets which tempted her most, "these are not the things which I want; have you any china figures, any mandarins?"

"Alack-a-day, miss, I had a great stock of that same china-ware, but now I'm quite out of them kind of things; but I believe," said he, rummaging in one of the deepest drawers, "I believe I have one left, and here it is."

"Oh that is the very thing! what's its price?"

"Only three shillings, ma'am."—Cecilia paid the money, and was just going to carry off the mandarin, when the pedler took out of his great-coat pocket a neat mahogany case: it was about a foot long, and fastened at each end by two little clasps; it had, besides, a small lock in the middle.

"What is that?" said Cecilia, eagerly.

"It's only a china figure, miss, which I am going to carry to an elderly lady, who lives nigh hand, and who is mighty fond of such things."

"Could you let me look at it?"

"And welcome, miss," said he, and opened the case.

"Oh goodness! how beautiful!" exclaimed Cecilia.

It was a figure of Flora, crowned with roses, and carrying a basket of flowers in her hand. Cecilia contemplated it with delight. "How I should like to give this to Louisa," said she to herself; and at last, breaking silence, "Did you promise it to the old lady?"

"Oh no, miss; I didn't promise it, she never saw it; and if so be that you'd like to take it, I'd make no more words about it."

"And how much does it cost?"

"Why, miss, as to that, I'll let you have it for half-a-guinea."

Cecilia immediately produced the box in which she kept her treasure, and, emptying it upon the table, she began to count the shillings: alas! there were but six shillings. "How provoking!" said she, "then I can't have it—where's the mandarin? Oh I have it," said she,

taking it up, and looking at it with the utmost disgust; "Is this the same that I had before?"

"Yes, miss, the very same," replied the pedler, who, during this time, had been examining the little box out of which Cecilia had taken her money: it was of silver.

"Why, ma'am, said he, "since you've taken such a fancy to the piece, if you've a mind to make up the remainder of the money, I will take this here little box, if you care to part with it."

Now this box was a keep-sake from Leonora to Cecilia. "No," said Cecilia hastily, blushing a little, and stretching out her hand to receive it.

"Oh, miss!" said he, returning it carelessly, "I hope there's no offence; I meant but to serve you, that's all; such a rare piece of china-work has no

cause to go a begging," added he, putting the Flora deliberately into the case, then turning the key with a jerk he let it drop into his pocket, and lifting up his box by the leather straps, he was preparing to depart.

"Oh, stay one minute!" said Cecilia, in whose mind there had passed a very warm conflict during the pedler's harangue. "Louisa would so like this Flora," said she, arguing with herself; "besides, it would be so generous in me to give it to her instead of that ugly mandarin; that would be doing only common justice, for I promised it to her, and she expects it. Though, when I come to look at this mandarin it is not even so good as hers was: the gilding is all rubbed off, so that I absolutely must buy this for her. Oh yes, I will, and she will be so delighted! and

then every body will say it is the prettiest thing they ever saw, and the broken mandarin will be forgotten for ever."

Here Cecilia's hand moved, and she was just going to decide: "Oh! but stop," said she to herself, "consider Leonora gave me this box, and it is a keepsake; however, now we have quarrelled and I dare say that she would not mind my parting with it: I'm sure that I should not care, if she was to give away my keep-sake the smelling bottle, or the ring, which I gave her; so what does it signify? besides, is it not my own, and have I not a right to do what I please with it?"

At this dangerous instant for Cecilia a party of her companions opened the door; she knew that they came as purchasers, and she dreaded her Flora's be-

A17·3

coming the prize of some higher bidder. "Here," said she, hastily putting the box into the pedler's hand, without looking at it; "take it, and give me the Flora." Her hand trembled, though she snatched it impatiently; she ran by, without seeming to mind any of her companions—she almost wished to turn back.

Let those who are tempted to do wrong by the hopes of future gratification, or the prospect of certain concealment and impunity, remember, that unless they are totally depraved, they bear in their own hearts a monitor, who will prevent their enjoying what they have ill obtained.

In vain Cecilia ran to the rest of her companions, to display her present, in hopes that the applause of others would restore her own self-complacency; in

vain she saw the Flora pass in due pomp from hand to hand, each vying with the other in extolling the beauty of the gift, and the generosity of the giver. Cecilia was still displeased with herself, with them, and even with their praise; from Louisa's gratitude, however, she yet expected much pleasure, and immediately she ran up stairs to her room.

In the mean time Leonora had gone into the hall to buy a bodkin; she had just broken hers. In giving her change, the pedler took out of his pocket, with some halfpence, the very box which Cecilia had sold to him. Leonora did not in the least suspect the truth, for her mind was above suspicion; and, besides, she had the utmost confidence in Cecilia. "I should like to have that box," said she, "for it is like one of which I was very fond."

The pedler named the price, and Leonora took the box: she intended to give it to little Louisa.

On going to her room she found her asleep, and she sat down softly by her bed-side. Louisa opened her eyes.

"I hope I didn't disturb you," said Leonora.

"Oh no; I didn't hear you come in; but what have you got there?"

"It is only a little box; would you like to have it? I bought it on purpose for you, as I thought perhaps it would please you; because it's like that which I gave Cecilia."

"Oh yes! that out of which she used to give me Barbary drops: I am very much obliged to you; I always thought *that* exceedingly pretty, and this, indeed, is as like it as possible. I can't unscrew it; will you try?"

Leonora unscrewed it.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Louisa, "this must be Cecilia's box; look, don't you see a great L at the bottom of it?"

Leonora's colour changed; "Yes," she replied calmly, "I see that, but it is no proof that it is Cecilia's; you know that I bought this box just now of the pedler."

"That may be," said Louisa; "but I remember scratching that L with my own needle, and Cecilia scolded me for it too; do go and ask her if she has lost her box—do," repeated Louisa, pulling her by the ruffle, as she did not seem to listen.

Leonora indeed did not hear, for she was lost in thought; she was comparing circumstances, which had before escaped her attention: she recollected, that Cecilia had passed her, as she came into

the hall, without seeming to see her, but had blushed as she passed. She remembered that the pedler appeared unwilling to part with the box, and was going to put it again into his pocket with the halfpence: "and why should he keep it in his pocket, and not show it with his other things?"—Combining all these circumstances, Leonora had no longer any doubt of the truth; for though she had honourable confidence in her friends, she had too much penetration to be implicitly credulous.—"Louisa;" she began, but at this instant she heard a step, which, by its quickness, she knew to be Cecilia's, coming along the passage.—"If you love me, Louisa," said Leonora, "say nothing about the box."

'Nay, but why not? I dare say she has lost it."

"No, my dear, I'm afraid she has not." Louisa looked surprised.

"But I have reasons for desiring you not to say any thing about it."

"Well then, I won't, indeed."

Cecilia opened the door, came forward smiling, as if secure of a good reception, and, taking the Flora out of the case, she placed it on the mantle-piece, opposite to Louisa's bed. "Dear, how beautiful," cried Louisa, starting up.

"Yes," said Cecilia, "and guess who it's for?"

"For me, perhaps!" said the ingenuous Louisa.

"Yes, take it, and keep it for my sake: you know that I broke your mandarin."

"Oh! but this is a great deal prettier and larger than that."

"Yes, I know it is; and I meant that it should be so; I should only have done what I was bound to do, if I had only given you a mandarin."

"Well, and that would have been enough, surely; but what a beautiful crown of roses! and then that basket of flowers! they almost look as if I could smell them:—dear Cecilia! I'm very much obliged to you, but I won't take it by way of payment for the mandarin you broke; for I'm sure you could not help that; and, besides, I should have broken it myself by this time. You shall give it to me entirely, and I'll keep it as long as I live as your keep-sake."

Louisa stopped short and coloured. The word keep-sake recalled the box to her mind, and all the train of ideas which the Flora had banished.—"But,"

said she, looking up wishfully in Cecilia's face, and holding the Flora doubtfully, "did you—"

Leonora, who was just quitting the room, turned her head back, and gave Louisa a look, which silenced her.

Cecilia was so infatuated with her vanity, that she neither perceived Leonora's sign, nor Louisa's confusion, but continued showing off her present, by placing it in various situations, till at length she put it into the case, and laying it down with an affected carelessness upon the bed, "I must go now, Louisa. Good bye," said she, running up, and kissing her; "but I'll come again presently"—then clapping the door after her, she went.

But, as soon as the fermentation of her spirits subsided, the sense of shame, which had been scarcely felt when

mixed with so many other sensations, rose uppermost in her mind. "What!" said she to herself, "is it possible that I have sold what I promised to keep for ever? and what Leonora gave me? and I have concealed it too, and have been making a parade of my generosity. Oh! what would Leonora, what would Louisa, what would every body think of me, if the truth were known?

Humiliated and grieved by these reflections, Cecilia began to search in her own mind for some consoling idea. She began to compare her conduct with the conduct of others of her own age; and at length, fixing her comparison upon her brother George, as the companion of whom, from her infancy, she had been habitually the most emulous, she recollected, that an almost similar circumstance had once happened to him,

and that he had not only escaped disgrace, but had acquired glory by an intrepid confession of his fault. Her father's words to her brother, on the occasion, she also perfectly recollected.

"Come to me, George," he said, holding out his hand, "you are a generous, brave boy: they who dare to confess their faults will make great and good men."

These were his words; but Cecilia, in repeating them to herself, forgot to lay that emphasis on the word *men*, which would have placed it in contradistinction to the word women. She willingly believed, that the observation extended equally to both sexes, and flattered herself, that she should exceed her brother in merit, if she owned a fault, which she thought that it would be so much more difficult to confess.

"Yes, but," said she, stopping herself, "how can I confess it? This very evening, in a few hours, the prize will be decided; Leonora or I shall win it: I have now as good a chance as Leonora, perhaps a better; and must I give up all my hopes? all that I have been labouring for this month past? Oh I never can;—if it were but to-morrow, or yesterday, or any day but this, I would not hesitate, but now I am almost certain of the prize, and if I win it—well, why then I will—I think, I will tell all—yes I will; I am determined," said Cecilia.

Here a bell summoned them to dinner; Leonora sat opposite to her, and she was not a little surprised, to see Cecilia look so gay and unconstrained. "Surely," said she to herself, "if Cecilia had done this that I suspect, she

would not, she could not look as she does." But Leonora little knew the cause of her gaiety; Cecilia was never in higher spirits, or better pleased with herself, than when she had resolved upon a sacrifice or a confession.

"Must not this evening be given to the most amiable? Whose then will it be?" All eyes glanced first at Cecilia, and then at Leonora. Cecilia smiled; Leonora blushed. "I see that it is not yet decided," said Mrs. Villars; and immediately they ran up stairs, amidst confused whisperings.

Cecilia's voice could be distinguished far above the rest. "How can she be so happy," said Leonora to herself: "Oh Cecilia, there was a time, when you could not have neglected me so!—when we were always together, the best of friends and companions; our wishes,

tastes, and pleasures the same! Surely she did once love me," said Leonora; "but now she is quite changed, she has even sold my keep-sake; and she would rather win a bracelet of hair from girls whom—she did not always think so much superior to Leonora, than have my esteem, my confidence, and my friendship, for her whole life: yes, for her whole life, for I am sure she will be an amiable woman: oh! that this bracelet had never been thought of, or that I were certain of her winning it; for I am sure that I do not wish to win it from her: I would rather, a thousand times rather, that we were as we used to be, than have all the glory in the world: and how pleasing Cecilia can be when she wishes to please!—how candid she is!—how much she can improve herself!—let me be just, though she

has offended me:—she is wonderfully improved within this last month: for one fault, and *that* against myself, shall I forget all her merits?"

As Leonora said these last words, she could but just hear the voices of her companions; they had left her alone in the gallery—she knocked softly at Louisa's door—"Come in," said Louisa, "I'm not asleep; oh," said she, starting up with the Flora in her hand, the instant that the door was opened; "I'm so glad you are come, Leonora, for I did so long to hear what you were all making such a noise about—have you forgot that the bracelet——"

"O yes! is this the evening?"

"Well, here's my white shell for you, I've kept it in my pocket this fortnight; and though Cecilia did give me this Flora, I still love you a great deal better."

"I thank you, Louisa," said Leonora, gratefully, "I will take your shell, and I shall value it as long as I live; but here is a red one, and if you wish to show me that you love me, you will give this to Cecilia; I know that she is particularly anxious for your preference, and I am sure that she deserves it."

"Yes, if I could I would choose both of you; but you know I can only choose which I like the best."

"If you mean, my dear Louisa," said Leonora, "that you like me the best, I am very much obliged to you; for, indeed, I wish you to love me; but it is enough for me to know it in private; I should not feel the least more pleasure at hearing it in public, or in having it made known to all my companions, especially at a time when it

would give poor Cecilia a great deal of pain."

"But why should it give her pain? I don't like her for being jealous of you."

"Nay, Louisa, surely you don't think Cecilia jealous; she only tries to excel, and to please; she is more anxious to succeed than I am, it is true, because she has a great deal more activity, and perhaps more ambition; and it would really mortify her to lose this prize; you know that she proposed it herself, it has been her object for this month past, and I am sure she has taken great pains to obtain it."

"But, dear Leonora, why should you lose it?"

"Indeed, my dear, it would be no loss to me; and, if it were, I would willingly suffer it for Cecilia; for, though we seem not to be such good

friends as we used to be, I love her very much, and she will love me again; I'm sure she will; when she no longer fears me as a rival, she will again love me as a friend."

Here Leonora heard a number of her companions running along the gallery. They all knocked hastily at the door, calling "Leonora! Leonora! will you never come? Cecilia has been with us this half hour."

Leonora smiled; "Well, Louisa," said she, smiling, "Will you promise me?"

"Oh, I'm sure, by the way they speak to you, that they won't give you the prize!" said the little Louisa; and the tears started into her eyes.

"They love me, though, for all that; and as for the prize, you know whom I wish to have it."

"Leonora! Leonora!" called her impatient companions; "don't you hear us? What are you about?"

"Oh she never will take any trouble about any thing," said one of the party, "let's go away."

"Oh go! go! make haste," cried Louisa; "don't stay, they are so angry; I will, I will, indeed!"

"Remember, then, that you have promised me," said Leonora, and she left the room. During all this time Cecilia had been in the garden with her companions. The ambition which she had felt to win the first prize, the prize of superior talents and superior application, was not to be compared to the absolute anxiety, which she now expressed, to win this simple testimony of the love and approbation of her equals and rivals.

To employ her exuberant activity, she had been dragging branches of lilacs and laburnums, roses, and sweet brier, to ornament the bower in which her fate was to be decided. It was excessively hot, but her mind was engaged, and she was indefatigable. She stood still, at last, to admire her works; her companions all joined in loud applause; they were not a little prejudiced in her favour, by the great eagerness which she expressed to win their prize, and by the great importance which she seemed to affix to the preference of each individual. At last, "Where is Leonora?" cried one of them, and immediately, as we have seen, they ran to call her.

Cecilia was left alone; overcome with heat, and too violent exertion, she had hardly strength to support herself; each

moment appeared to her intolerably long: she was in a state of the utmost suspense, and all her courage failed her; even hope forsook her, and hope is a cordial which leaves the mind depressed and enfeebled. "The time is now come," said Cecilia, "in a few moments all will be decided—In a few moments! goodness! how much do I hazard! If I should not win the prize, how shall I confess what I have done? How shall I beg Leonora to forgive me? I who hoped to restore my friendship to her as an honour!—they are gone to see for her—the moment she appears I shall be forgotten—what shall—what shall I do?" said Cecilia, covering her face with her hands.

Such was her situation, when Leonora, accompanied by her companions, opened the hall-door; they most of

them ran forwards to Cecilia. As Leonora came into the bower, she held out her hand to Cecilia—" we are not rivals but friends, I hope," said she. Cecilia clasped her hand, but she was in too great agitation to speak.

" The table was now set in the arbour —The vase was now placed in the middle. " Well! said Cecilia, eagerly, " who begins?" Caroline, one of her friends, came forwards first, and then all the others successively.—Cecilia's emotion was hardly conceivable. " Now they are all in!—count them, Caroline!"

One, two, three, four; the numbers are both equal.

There was a dead silence.

" No, they are not," exclaimed Cecilia, pressing forward and putting a shell into the vase—" I have not given mine, and I give it to Leonora." Then

snatching the bracelet, "it is yours, Leonora," said she, "take it, and give me back your friendship." The whole assembly gave an universal clap, and shout of applause.

"I cannot be surprised at this from you, Cecilia," said Leonora; "and do you then still love me as you used to do?"

"Oh Leonora! stop! don't praise me; I don't deserve this," said she, turning to her loudly applauding companions; "you will soon despise me—oh, Leonora, you will never forgive me!—I have deceived you—I have sold——"

At this instant Mrs. Villars appeared—the crowd divided—she had heard all that passed from her window.

"I applaud your generosity, Cecilia," said she, "but I am to tell you, that

in this instance it is unsuccessful: you have it not in your power to give the prize to Leonora—it is yours—I have another vote to give to you—you have forgotten Louisa."

"Louisa! but surely, ma'am, Louisa loves Leonora better than she does me."

"She commissioned me, however," said Mrs. Villars, "to give you a red shell; and you will find it in this box."

Cecilia started, and turned as pale as death—it was the fatal box.

Mrs. Villars produced another box—she opened it—it contained the Flora;—"And Louisa also desired me," said she, "to return you this Flora"—she put it into Cecilia's hand—Cecilia trembled so that she could not hold it; Leonora caught it.

"Oh madam! oh Leonora!" exclaimed Cecilia; "now I have no hope

left: I intended, I was just going to tell——"

"Dear Cecilia," said Leonora, "you need not tell it me, I know it already, and I forgive you with all my heart."

"Yes, I can prove to you," said Mrs. Villars, "that Leonora has forgiven you: it is she who has given you the prize; it was she who persuaded Louisa to give you her vote. I went to see her a little while ago, and perceiving by her countenance, that something was the matter, I pressed her to tell me what it was.

"'Why, madam,' said she, 'Leonora has made me promise to give my shell to Cecilia; now I don't love Cecilia half so well as I do Leonora; besides, I would not have Cecilia think I vote for her because she gave me a Flora.' Whilst Louisa was speaking," continued Mrs. Villars, "I saw this silver box lying on

the bed; I took it up, and asked, if it was not yours, and how she came by it.

"'Indeed, madam,' said Louisa, 'I could have been almost certain that it was Cecilia's; but Leonora gave it me, and she said that she bought it of the pedler this morning; if any body else had told me so, I could not have believed them, because I remembered the box so well; but I can't help believing Leonora.'

"But did not you ask Cecilia about it?" said I.

"'No, madam,' replied Louisa, 'for Leonora forbade me.'

"I guessed her reason. Well," said I, "give me the box, and I will carry your shell in it to Cecilia.

"'Then, madam,' said she, 'if I must give it her, pray do take the Flora, and return it to her first, that she may not think it is for that I do it.'"

"Oh, generous Leonora!" exclaimed Cecilia; "but indeed, Louisa, I cannot take your shell."

"Then, dear Cecilia, accept of mine instead of it; you cannot refuse it, I only follow your example; as for the bracelet," added Leonora, taking Cecilia's hand, "I assure you I don't wish for it, and you do, and you deserve it."

"No," said Cecilia, "indeed I do not deserve it; next to you surely Louisa deserves it best."

"Louisa! oh yes, Louisa," exclaimed every body with one voice.

"Yes," said Mrs. Villars, "and let Cecilia carry the bracelet to her; she deserves that reward. For one fault I cannot forget all your merits, Cecilia; nor, I am sure, will your companions."

"Then, surely, not your best friend," said Leonora, kissing her.

Every body present was moved—they looked up to Leonora with respectful and affectionate admiration.

"Oh, Leonora, how I love you! and how I wish to be like you!" exclaimed Cecilia,—"to be as good, as generous!"

"Rather wish, Cecilia," interrupted Mrs. Villars, "to be as just; to be as strictly honourable, and as invariably consistent. Remember, that many of our sex are capable of great efforts, of making what they call great sacrifices to virtue, or to friendship; but few treat their friends with habitual gentleness, or uniformly conduct themselves with prudence and good sense."

THE LITTLE MERCHANTS.

CHAPTER I.

Chi di gallina nasce convien che rozole.
As the old cock crows, so crows the young.

Those who have visited Italy, give us an agreeable picture of the cheerful industry of the children of all ages in the celebrated city of Naples: their manner of living, and their numerous employments, are exactly described in the following "Extract from a Traveller's Journal."*

* Varieties of Literature, vol. i. page 299.

"The children are busied in various "ways. A great number of them bring "fish for sale to town from Santa Lucia; "others are very often seen about the "arsenals, or wherever carpenters are at "work, employed in gathering up the "chips and pieces of wood, or by the "sea-side picking up sticks, and what-"ever else has drifted ashore; which, "when their basket is full, they carry "away. Children of two or three years "old, who can scarcely crawl along upon "the ground, in company with boys of "five or six, are employed in this petty "trade. Hence they proceed with their "baskets into the heart of the city, "where in several places they form a "sort of little market, sitting round "with their stock of wood before them. "Labourers, and the lower order of "citizens buy it of them, to burn in

" the tripods for warming themselves, " or to use in their scanty kitchens. " Other children carry about for sale the " water of the sulphureous wells, which, " particularly in the spring-season, is " drank in great abundance. Others " again endeavour to turn a few pence " by buying a small matter of fruit, of " pressed honey, cakes, and comfits, and " then, like little pedlers, offer and sell " them to other children, always for no " more profit than that they may have " their share of them free of expense. It " is really curious to see how an urchin, " whose whole stock and property con- " sist in a board and a knife, will carry " about a water-melon, or a half-roasted " gourd, collect a troop of children " round him, set down his board, and " proceed to divide the fruit into small " pieces among them. The buyers keep

"a sharp look-out, to see that they have "enough for their little piece of copper; "and the Liliputian tradesman acts with "no less caution, as the exigencies of the "case may require, to prevent his being "cheated out of a morsel."

The advantages of truth and honesty, and the value of a character for integrity, are very early felt amongst these little merchants in their daily intercourse with each other. The fair dealer is always sooner or later seen to prosper; the most cunning cheat is at last detected and disgraced.

Numerous instances of the truth of this common observation were remarked by many Neapolitan children, especially by those who were acquainted with the characters and history of Piedro and Francisco, two boys originally equal in birth, fortune, and capacity, but dif-

ferent in their education, and consequently in their habits and conduct. Francisco was the son of an honest gardener, who, from the time he could speak, taught him to love to speak the truth; showed him that liars are never believed—that cheats and thieves cannot be trusted, and that the shortest way to obtain a good character is to deserve it.—Youth and white paper, as the proverb says, take all impressions. The boy profited much by his father's precepts, and more by his example; he always heard his father speak the truth, and saw that he dealt fairly with every body. In all his childish traffic, Francisco, imitating his parents, was scrupulously honest, and therefore all his companions trusted him—"As honest as Francisco," became a sort of proverb amongst them.

"As honest as Francisco,"—repeated Piedro's father, when he one day heard this saying; "let them say so: I say, As sharp as Piedro, and let us see which will go through the world best." With the idea of making his son *sharp*, he made him cunning; he taught him, that to make a *good bargain* was to deceive as to the value and price of whatever he wanted to dispose of, to get as much money as possible from customers by taking advantage of their ignorance, or of their confidence; he often repeated his favourite proverb—"The buyer has need of a hundred eyes; the seller has need but of one;"* and he took frequent opportunities of explaining the meaning of this maxim to his son. He was a fisherman, and as his gains de-

* Chi compra ha bisogna di cent occhi, chi vende n'ha assai di uno.

pended more upon fortune than upon prudence, he trusted habitually to his good luck. After being idle for a whole day, he would cast his line or his nets, and if he was lucky enough to catch a fine fish, he would go and show it in triumph to his neighbour the gardener—"You are obliged to work all day long for your daily bread," he would say; "look here, I work but five minutes, and I have not only daily bread, but daily fish." Upon these occasions our fisherman always forgot, or neglected to count, the hours and days which were wasted in waiting for a fair wind to put to sea, or angling in vain on the shore. Little Piedro, who used to bask in the sun upon the sea-shore beside his father, and to lounge or sleep away his time in a fishing-boat, acquired habits of idleness, which seemed to his father of little

consequence whilst he was *but a child.* "What will you do with Piedro as he grows up, neighbour?" said the gardener; "he is smart and quick enough, but he is always in mischief. Scarcely a day has passed for this fortnight, but I have caught him amongst my grapes. I track his footsteps all over my vineyard." "*He is but a child* yet, and knows no better," replied the fisherman. "But if you don't teach him better now he is a child, how will he know better when he is a man?" said the gardener.—"A mighty noise about a bunch of grapes, truly!" cried the fisherman—"A few grapes, more or less, in your vineyard, what does it signify?"—"I speak for your son's sake, and not for the sake of my grapes," said the gardener—"and I tell you again, the boy will not do well in the world, neighbour, if you don't

look after him in time." "He'll do well enough in the world, you will find," answered the fisherman, carelessly—"whenever he casts my nets, they never come up empty—It is better to be lucky than wise."* This was a proverb which Piedro had frequently heard from his father, and to which he most willingly trusted, because it gave him less trouble to fancy himself fortunate, than to make himself wise. "Come here, child," said his father to him, when he returned home after the preceding conversation with the gardener; "how old are you, my boy—twelve years old, is not it?" "As old as Francisco, and older by six months," said Piedro. "And smarter and more knowing by six years," said his father. "Here, take these fish

* E' meglio esser fortunato que savia.

to Naples, and let us see how you'll sell them for me. Venture a small fish, as the proverb says, to catch a great one.* I was too late with them at the market yesterday, but nobody will know but what they are just fresh out of the water, unless you go and tell them."—"Not I, trust me for that, I'm not such a fool," replied Piedro, laughing—"I leave that to Francisco.—Do you know I saw him the other day miss selling a melon for his father by turning the bruised side to the customer, who was just laying down the money for it, and who was a raw servant-boy, moreover; one who would never have guessed there were two sides to a melon, if he had not, as you say, father, been told of it." "Off with you to market; you are a droll chap," said his father, "and will sell

* *Butta una sardella per pigliar un luccio.*

my fish cleverly, I'll be bound; as to the rest, let every man take care of his own grapes—you understand me, Piedro?" "Perfectly," said the boy; who perceived that his father was indifferent as to his honesty, provided he sold fish at the highest price possible. He proceeded to the market, and he offered his fish with assiduity to every person whom he thought likely to buy it, especially to those upon whom he thought he could impose. He positively asserted to all who looked at his fish, that they were just fresh out of the water; good judges of men and fish knew that he said what was false, and passed him by with neglect; but it was at last what he called his *good luck* to meet with the very same young raw servant-boy, who would have bought the bruised melon from Francisco. He made

up to him directly, crying—"Fish!—Fine fresh fish! fresh fish." "Was it caught to-day?" said the boy.—"Yes, this morning; not an hour ago;" said Piedro, with the greatest effrontery. The servant-boy was imposed upon, and being a foreigner, speaking the Italian language but imperfectly, and not being expert at reckoning the Italian money, he was no match for the cunning Piedro, who cheated him not only as to the freshness, but as to the price of the commodity. Piedro received nearly half as much again for his fish as he ought to have done.

On his road homewards from Naples to the little village of Resina, where his father lived, he overtook Francisco, who was leading his father's ass; the ass was laden with large panniers, which were filled with the stalks and leaves of cau-

liflowers, cabbages, broccoli, lettuces, &c. all the refuse of the Neapolitan kitchens, which are usually collected by the gardeners' boys, and carried to the gardens round Naples, to be mixed with other manure.

"Well filled panniers truly," said Piedro, as he overtook Francisco and the ass. The panniers were indeed not only filled to the top, but piled up with much skill and care, so that the load met over the animal's back.—"It is not a very heavy load for the ass, though it looks so large," said Francisco; "poor fellow, however, he shall have a little of this water," added he, leading the ass to a pool by the road side.—"I was not thinking of the ass, man; I was not thinking of any ass, but of you, when I said, Well filled panniers, truly!—This is your morning's work, I presume, and you'll make an-

other journey to Naples to-day, on the same errand, I warrant, before your father thinks you have done enough?"—"Not before *my father* thinks I have done enough, but before I think so myself," replied Francisco. "I do enough to satisfy myself and my father too, without slaving myself after your fashion. Look here," said Piedro, producing the money he had received for the fish. "All this was had for asking for; it is no bad thing, you'll allow, to know how to ask for money properly." "I should be ashamed to beg, or borrow either," said Francisco. "Neither did I get what you see by begging, or borrowing either," said Piedro, "but by using my wits—not as you did yesterday, when, like a novice, you showed the bruised side of your melon, and so spoiled your market by your wisdom." "Wisdom I think it

still," said Francisco. "And your father?" "And my father," said Francisco. "Mine is of a different way of thinking," said Piedro; "he always tells me, that the buyer has need of a hundred eyes, and if one can blind the whole hundred, so much the better. You must know, I got off the fish to-day that my father could not sell yesterday in the market— Got it off for fresh just out of the river —got twice as much as the market price for it, and from whom think you?— Why, from the very booby, that would have bought the bruised melon for a sound one, if you would have let him.— You'll allow I'm no fool, Francisco, and that I'm in a fair way to grow rich, if I go on as I have begun." "Stay," said Francisco, "you forgot that the booby you took in to-day will not be so easily taken in to-morrow. He will buy no

more fish from you, because he will be afraid of your cheating him; but he will be ready enough to buy fruit from me, because he will know I shall not cheat him—So you'll have lost a customer, and I gained one." "With all my heart," said Piedro, "one customer does not make a market; if he buys no more from me, what care I, there are people enough to buy fish in Naples." "And do you mean to serve them all in the same manner?" "If they will be only so good as to give me leave," said Piedro, laughing, and repeating his father's proverb, "Venture a small fish to catch a large one*." He had learned to think, that to cheat in making bargains was witty and clever. "And you have never considered, then," said Francisco, "that all these people will, one after another, find you out in

time?"—"Aye, in time, but it will be some time first; there are a great many of them, enough to last me all summer, if I lose a customer a day," said Piedro. "And next summer, what will you do?" "Next summer is not come yet; there is time enough to think what I shall do before next summer comes. Why, now, suppose the blockheads, after they had been taken in, and found it out, all joined against me, and would buy none of our fish—What then? Are there no trades going but that of a fisherman?—In Naples, are there not a hundred ways of making money for a smart lad like me? as my father says. What do you think of turning merchant, and selling sugar-plums and cakes to the children in their market?—Would they be hard to deal with, think you?" "I think not," said Francisco; "but I think

the children would find out in time if they were cheated, and would like it as little as the men." "I don't doubt them; then *in time* I could, you know, change my trade, sell chips and sticks in the wood market; hand about lemonade to the fine folks, or twenty other things—there are trades enough, man."—"Yes, for the honest dealer," said Francisco; "but for no other; for in all of them you'll find, as *my* father says, that a good character is the best fortune to set up with. Change your trade ever so often, you'll be found out for what you are at last." "And what am I, pray?" said Piedro, angrily;—"the whole truth of the matter is, Francisco, that you envy my good luck, and can't bear to hear this money jingle in my hand. Aye, stroke the long ears of your ass, and look as wise as you please—It's better

to be lucky than wise, as *my* father says. —Good morning to you, when I am found out for what I am, or when the worst comes to the worst, I can drive a stupid ass, with his panniers filled with rubbish, as well as you do now, *honest Francisco.*"—"Not quite so well; unless you were *honest Francisco*, you would not fill his panniers quite so readily."

This was certain, that Francisco was so well known for his honesty amongst all the people at Naples with whom his father was acquainted, that every one was glad to deal with him; and as he never wronged any one, all were willing to serve him, at least as much as they could without loss to themselves; so that after the market was over, his panniers were regularly filled by the gardeners and others, with whatever he wanted. His industry was constant, his

gains small but certain, and he every day had more and more reason to trust to his father's maxim—That honesty is the best policy.

The foreign servant lad, to whom Francisco had so honestly, or, as Piedro said, so sillily, shown the bruised side of the melon, was an Englishman. He left his native country, of which he was extremely fond, to attend upon his master, to whom he was still more attached. His master was in a declining state of health, and this young lad waited upon him more to his mind than his other servants. We must, in consideration of his zeal, fidelity, and inexperience, pardon him for not being a good judge of fish. Though he had simplicity enough to be easily cheated once, he had too much sense to be twice made a dupe. The next time he

met Piedro in the market, he happened to be in company with several English gentlemen's servants, and he pointed Piedro out to them all as an arrant knave; they heard his cry of "Fresh fish! fresh fish! fine fresh fish!" with incredulous smiles, and let him pass, but not without some expressions of contempt, which, though uttered in English, he tolerably well understood, for the tone of contempt is sufficiently expressive in all languages. He lost more by not selling his fish to these people, than he had gained the day before by cheating the *English booby*. The market was well supplied, and he could not get rid of his cargo. "Is not this truly provoking?" said he, as he passed by Francisco, who was selling fruit for his father. "Look, my basket is as heavy as when I left home, and look at 'em

yourself, they really are fine fresh fish to-day, and yet, because that revengeful booby told how I took him in yesterday, not one of yonder crowd would buy them: and all the time they really are fresh to-day."—"So they are," said Francisco; "but you said so yesterday when they were not, and he that was duped then, is not ready to believe you to-day. How does he know that you deserve it better?" "He might have looked at the fish; they are fresh to-day. I'm sure," repeated Piedro, "he need not have been afraid to-day." "Aye," said Francisco, "but, as my father said to you once —The scalded dog fears cold water."*

Here their conversation was interrupted by the approach of this same English lad, who smiled as he came up

* L'an scottato de l'acqua calda ha paura poi della fredda.

to Francisco, and taking up a fine pine apple, he said, in a mixture of bad Italian and English—"I need not look at the other side of this—you will tell me if it is not as good as it looks; name your price, I know you have but one, and that an honest one, and as to the rest, I am able and willing to pay for what I buy; that is to say, my master is, which comes to the same thing. I wish your fruit could make him well, and it would be worth its weight in gold, to me at least.—We must have some of your grapes for him." —"Is not he well? We must then pick out the best for him," said Francisco, singling out a tempting bunch—"I hope he will like these; but if you could some day come as far as Resina, it is a village but a few miles out of town, where we have our vineyard, you could there choose for yourself, and pluck them fresh from

the vines for your poor master."—"Bless you, my good boy, I should take you for an Englishman, by your way of dealing. I'll come to your village, only write me down the name, for your Italian names slip through my head; I'll come to your vineyard if it was ten miles off; and all the time we stay in Naples (may it not be so long as I fear it will!) I'll, with my master's leave, which he never refuses me to any thing that's proper, and that's what this is, deal with you for all our fruit, as sure as my name's Arthur, and with none else, with my good will. I wish all your countrymen would take after you in honesty—so I do—" concluded the Englishman, looking full at Piedro, who took up his heavy melancholy basket of fish, and walked off looking somewhat silly.

Arthur, the English servant, was as good as his word; he dealt constantly with Francisco, and proved an excellent customer, buying from him during the whole season as much fruit as his master wanted. His master, who was an Englishman of distinction, was invited to take up his residence during his stay in Italy, at the Count de F.'s villa, which was in the environs of Naples, an easy walk from Resina. Francisco had the pleasure of seeing his father's vineyard often full of generous visitors; and Arthur, who had circulated the anecdote of the bruised melon, was, he said, "proud to think that some of this was his doing, and that an Englishman never forgot a good turn, be it from a countryman or foreigner."

"My dear boy," said Francisco's father to him, whilst Arthur was in the

vineyard helping to tend the vines, "I am to thank you and your honesty, it seems, for our having our hands so full of business this season. It is fair you should have a share of our profits." "So I have, father, enough and enough, when I see you and mother going on so well. What can I want more?"—" Oh, my brave boy, we know you are a grateful good son; but I have been your age myself; you have companions; you have little expenses of your own. Here, this vine, this fig-tree, and a melon a week next summer, shall be yours—with these you'll make a fine figure amongst the little Neapolitan merchants—and all I wish is, you may prosper as well, and by the same honest means, in managing for yourself, as you have done managing for me." "Thank you, father; and if I prosper at all, it shall

be by those means and no other, or I should not be worthy to be called your son."

Piedro, the cunning, did not make quite so successful a summer's work as did Francisco, the honest. No extraordinary events happened, no singular instance of bad or good luck occurred; but he felt, as persons usually do, the natural consequences of his own actions. —He pursued his scheme of imposing, as far as he could, upon every person he dealt with, and the consequence was, that at last nobody would deal with him.—" It is easy to out-wit one person, but impossible to out-wit all the world," said a man* who knew the world at least as well as either Piedro, or his father.—

* The duke de Rochefoucault — " On peut être plus fin qu'un autre, mais pas plus fin que tous les autres."

Piedro's father, amongst others, had reason to complain; he saw his old customers fall off from him, and was told whenever he went into the market, that his son was such a cheat, there was no dealing with him. One day when he was returning from market in a very bad humour in consequence of these reproaches, and of his not having found customers for his goods, he espied his *smart* son Piedro, at a little merchant's fruit-board, devouring a fine gourd with prodigious greediness—" Where, glutton, do you find money to pay for these dainties?" exclaimed his father, coming close up to him with angry gestures.—Piedro's mouth was much too full to make an immediate reply, nor did his father wait for any, but darting his hand into the youth's pocket, pulled forth a handful of silver. " The money,

father," said Piedro, "that I got for the fish yesterday, and that I meant to give you to-day, before you went out." "Then I'll make you remember it against another time, sirrah!" said his father. "I'll teach you to fill your stomach with my money!—Am I to lose my customers by your tricks, and then find you here eating my all?"—You are a rogue, and every body has found you out to be a rogue; and the worst of rogues I find you, who scruples not to cheat his own father." Saying these words, with great vehemence he seized hold of Piedro, and in the very midst of the little fruit-market gave him a severe beating. This beating did the boy no good; it was vengeance, not punishment. Piedro saw that his father was in a passion, and knew that he was beaten because he was found out to be a rogue, rather than for

being one; he recollected perfectly, that his father once said to him, "Let every one take care of his own grapes." Indeed it was scarcely reasonable to expect, that a boy who had been educated to think, that he might cheat every customer he could in the way of trade, should be afterwards scrupulously honest in his conduct towards the father, whose proverbs encouraged his childhood in cunning. Piedro writhed with bodily pain, as he left the market, after his drubbing, but his mind was not in the least amended; on the contrary, he was hardened to the sense of shame, by the loss of reputation. All the little merchants were spectators of this scene, and heard his father's words.—"You *are* a rogue and the worst of rogues, who scruples not to cheat his own father." These words were long remembered, and long

did Piedro feel their effects. He once flattered himself, that, when his trade of selling fish failed him, he could readily engage in some other; but he now found to his mortification, that what Francisco's father said proved true, "In all trades the best fortune to set up with is a good character." Not one of the little Neapolitan merchants would either enter into partnership with him, give him credit, or even trade with him for ready money.—"If you would cheat your own father, to be sure you will cheat us," was continually said to him by these prudent little people. Piedro was taunted and treated with contempt at home and abroad. His father, when he found that his son's *smartness* was no longer useful in making bargains, shoved him out of his way whenever he met him; all the food or clothes that

he had at home seemed to be given to him grudgingly, and with such expressions as these—"Take that, but it is too good for you; you must eat this now, instead of gourds and figs, and be thankful you have even this." Piedro spent a whole winter very unhappily; he expected that all his old tricks, and especially what his father had said of him in the market-place, would be soon forgotten; but month passed after month, and still these things were fresh in the memory of all who had known them. It is not easy to get rid of a bad character. A very great rogue* was once heard to say, that he would, with all his heart, give ten thousand pounds for a good character, because he knew that he could make twenty thousand by it. Something like this was the sen

* Chartres.

timent of our cunning hero, when he experienced the evils of a bad reputation, and when he saw the numerous advantages which Francisco's good character procured. Such had been Piedro's wretched education, that even the hard lessons of experience could not alter its pernicious effects. He was sorry his knavery had been detected, but he still thought it clever to cheat, and was secretly persuaded, that, if he had cheated successfully, he should have been happy. "But I know I am not happy now," said he to himself one morning, as he sat alone disconsolate by the sea-shore, dressed in tattered garments, weak and hungry, with an empty basket beside him. His fishing-rod, which he held between his knees, bent over the dry sands instead of into the water, for he was not thinking of what

he was about; his arms were folded, his head hung down, and his ragged hat was slouched over his face. He was a melancholy spectacle. Francisco, as he was coming from his father's vineyard with a large dish of purple and white grapes upon his head, and a basket of melons and figs hanging upon his arm, chanced to see Piedro seated in this melancholy posture. Touched with compassion, Francisco approached him softly; his footsteps were not heard upon the sands, and Piedro did not perceive that any one was near him, till he felt something cold touch his hand; he then started, and looking up, saw a bunch of ripe grapes, which Francisco was holding over his head.—"Eat them, you'll find them very good, I hope," said Francisco, with a benevolent smile. —"They are excellent—most excellent,

and I am much obliged to you, Francisco," said Piedro. "I was very hungry, and that's what I often am now, without any body's caring any thing about it. I am not the favourite I was with my father, but I know it is all my own fault."—"Well, but cheer up," said Francisco, "my father always says, 'One who knows he has been in fault, and acknowledges it, will scarcely be in fault again.' Yes, take as many figs as you will," continued he, and he held his basket closer to Piedro, who, as he saw, cast a hungry eye upon one of the ripe figs.—"But," said Piedro, after he had taken several, "shall not I get you into a scrape by taking so many? Won't your father be apt to miss them?" "Do you think I would give them to you if they were not my own?" said Fran-

cisco, with a sudden glance of indignation. "Well, don't be angry that I asked the question; it was only from fear of getting you into disgrace that I asked it." "It would not be easy for any body to do that, I hope," said Francisco, rather proudly.—"And to me less than any body," replied Piedro, in an insinuating tone, "*I*, that am so much obliged to you!"—"A bunch of grapes, and a few figs, are no mighty obligation," said Francisco, smiling; "I wish I could do more for you; you seem, indeed, to have been very unhappy of late; we never see you in the markets as we used to do."—"No, ever since my father beat me, and called me rogue before all the children there, I have never been able to show my face without being gibed at by one or t'other. If you would but take me

along with you amongst them, and only just *seem* my friend for a day or two, or so, it would quite set me up again, for they all like you."——— "I would rather *be* than seem your friend, if I could," said Francisco.— "Aye, to be sure, that would be still better," said Piedro, observing that Francisco, as he uttered his last sentence, was separating the grapes, and other fruit, into two equal divisions— "To be sure I would rather you would *be* than *seem* a friend to me; but I thought that was too much to ask at first—though I have a notion, notwithstanding I have been so *unlucky* lately—I have a notion, you would have no reason to repent of it; you would find me no bad hand if you were to try, and take me into partnership."—

"Partnership!" interrupted Francisco, drawing back alarmed——"I had no thoughts of that."—"But won't you, can't you," said Piedro, in a supplicating tone; "*can't* you have thoughts of it? You'd find me a very active partner." Francisco still drew back, and kept his eyes fixed upon the ground—he was embarrassed, for he pitied Piedro, and he scarcely knew how to point out to him that something more is necessary in a partner in trade besides activity—honesty.—"Can't you?" repeated Piedro, thinking that he hesitated from merely mercenary motives. "You shall have what share of the profits you please."—"I was not thinking of the profits," said Francisco, "but without meaning to be ill-natured to you, Piedro, I must say, that I cannot enter into

any partnership with you at present: but I will do what, perhaps, you will like as well," said he, taking half the fruit out of his basket.—" You are heartily welcome to this; try and sell it in the children's fruit-market; I'll go on before you, and speak to those I am acquainted with, and tell them you are going to set up a new character, and that you hope to make it a good one. Hey, shall I?"—" Thank you for ever, dear Francisco," cried Piedro, seizing his plentiful gift of fruit—" say what you please for me." " But don't make me say any thing that is not true," said Francisco, pausing.—" No, to be sure not," said Piedro; " I *do* mean to give no room for scandal.—If I could get them to trust me as they do you, I should be happy indeed." " That is

what you may do, if you please," said Francisco. "Adieu, I wish you well with all my heart, but I must leave you now, or I shall be too late for the market."

THE LITTLE MERCHANTS.

CHAPTER II.

Chi va piano, va sano, e anchè lontano.
Fair and softly goes far in a day.

PIEDRO had now an opportunity to establish a good character. When he went into the market with his grapes and figs, he found that he was not shunned or taunted as usual; all seemed disposed to believe in his intended reformation, and to give him a fair trial. These favourable dispositions towards him were the consequence of Francisco's benevolent representations: he told them that he thought Piedro had

suffered enough to cure him of his tricks, and that it would be cruelty in them, because he might once have been in fault, to banish him by their reproaches from amongst them, and thus to prevent him from the means of gaining his livelihood honestly. Piedro made a good beginning, and gave what several of the younger customers thought excellent bargains; his grapes and figs were quickly sold, and with the money that he got for them, he the next day purchased from a fruit-dealer a fresh supply, and thus he went on for some time, conducting himself with scrupulous honesty, so that he acquired some credit among his companions. They no longer watched him with suspicious eyes; they trusted to his measures and weights, and they counted less carefully the change which they received from

him. The satisfaction he felt from this alteration in their manners was at first delightful to him; but in proportion to his credit his opportunities of defrauding increased, and these became temptations which he had not the firmness to resist. His old manner of thinking recurred. "I make but a few shillings a day, and this is but slow work," said he to himself—"what signifies my good character if I make so little by it?" 'Light gains, and frequent, make a heavy purse,'* was one of Francisco's proverbs. But Piedro was in too great haste to get rich, to take *time* into his account. He set his invention to work, and he did not want for ingenuity, to devise means of cheating, without running the risk of detec-

* Poco è spesso empie il borsetto.

tion. He observed that the younger part of the community were extremely fond of certain coloured sugar-plums, and of burnt almonds; with the money he had earned by two months trading in fruit he laid in a large stock, or what appeared to these little merchants a large stock, of these almonds and sugar-plums; and he painted in capital gold-coloured letters upon his board, "The sweetest, largest, most admirable sugar-plums of all colours ever sold in Naples to be had here; and in gratitude to his numerous customers, Piedro adds to these, burnt almonds gratis."

This advertisement attracted the attention of all who could read, and many who could not read heard it repeated with delight. Crowds of children surrounded Piedro's board of promise, and they all went away the first day amply

satisfied; each had a full measure of coloured sugar-plums at the usual price, and along with these a burnt almond gratis. The burnt almond had such an effect upon the public judgment, that it was universally allowed the sugar-plums were, as the advertisement set forth, the largest, sweetest, most admirable ever sold in Naples; though all the time these were in no respect better than any other sugar-plums. It was generally reported, that Piedro gave full measure, fuller than was to be had at any other board in the city; he measured the sugar-plums in a little cubical tin box, and this, it was affirmed, he heaped up to the top, and pressed down before he poured out the contents into the open hands of his approving customers. This belief, and Piedro's popularity, continued longer even than he had expected;

and, as he thought his sugar-plums had now secured their reputation with *the generous public*, he gradually neglected to add burnt almonds gratis. One day a boy of about ten years old passed carelessly by, whistling as he went along, and swinging a carpenter's rule in his hand. "Ha! what have we here?" cried he, stopping to read what was written on Piedro's board. "This promises rarely.—Old as I am, and tall of my age, which makes the matter worse, I am still as fond of sugar-plums as my little sister, who is five years younger than I.———Come, Signor, fill me quick, for I'm in haste to taste them, two measures of the sweetest, largest, most admirable sugar-plums in Naples —one measure for myself, and one for my little Rosetta."—"You'll pay for yourself and your sister then," said

Piedro, "for no credit is given here." "No credit do I ask," replied the lively boy; "when I told you I loved sugar-plums, did I tell you I loved them, or even my sister, so well as to run in debt for them? Here's for myself, and here's for my sister's share," said he, laying down his money—"and now for the burnt almonds gratis, my good fellow."—"They are all out; I have been out of burnt almonds this great while," said Piedro. "Then why are they in your advertisement here?" said Carlo. "I have not had time to scratch them out of the board."—"What, not when you have, by your own account, been out of them a great while?—I did not know it required so much time to blot out a few words—let us try;" and as he spoke, Carlo, for that was the name of Piedro's new

customer, pulled a bit of white chalk out of his pocket, and drew a broad score across the line on the board which promised burnt almonds gratis,—"You are most impatient," said Piedro; "I shall have a fresh stock of almonds to-morrow." "Why must the board tell a lie to-day?"—"It would ruin me to alter it," said Piedro. "A lie may ruin you, but I could scarcely think the truth could."—"You have no right to meddle with me or my board," said Piedro, put off his guard, and out of his usual soft voice of civility, by this last observation. "My character, and that of my board, are too firmly established now for any chance customer like you to injure."—"I never dreamed of injuring you or any one else," said Carlo—"I wish, moreover, you may not injure yourself.—Do as you please

with your board, but give me my sugar-plums, for I have some right to meddle with those, having paid for them."—"Hold out your hand then." "No, put them in here if you please, put my sister's at least in here, she likes to have them in this box; I bought some for her in it yesterday, and she'll think they'll taste the better out of the same box. But how is this? Your measure does not fill my box nearly; you give us very few sugar-plums for our money."—"I give you full measure, as I give to every body."—"The measure should be an inch cube, I know," said Carlo: "that's what all the little merchants have agreed to, you know."—"True," said Piedro, "so it is."—"And so it is, I must allow," said Carlo, measuring the outside of it with the carpenter's rule which he held in

his hand. "An inch every way—and yet by my eye—and I have no bad one, being used to measuring carpenters' work for my father, by my eye I should think this would have held more sugar-plums."—"The eye often deceives us," says Piedro; "there's nothing like measuring, you find."—"There's nothing like measuring, I find, indeed," replied Carlo, as he looked closely at the end of his rule, which, since he spoke last, he had put into the tin cube to take its depth in the inside.—"This is not as deep by a quarter of an inch, Signor Piedro, measured within as it is measured without."—Piedro changed colour terribly, and seizing hold of the tin box, endeavoured to wrest it from the youth who measured so accurately. Carlo held his prize fast, and lifting it above his head, he ran into the midst

of the square where the little market was held, exclaiming, "A discovery! a discovery! that concerns all who love sugar-plums. A discovery! a discovery! that concerns all who have ever bought the sweetest, largest, most admirable sugar-plums ever sold in Naples."

The crowd gathered from all parts of the square as he spoke. "We have bought," and "We have bought of those sugar-plums," cried several little voices at once, "if you mean Piedro's."—"The same," continued Carlo; "he who out of gratitude to his numerous customers, gives, or promises to give, burnt almonds gratis."—"Excellent they were!" cried several voices. "We all know Piedro well; but what's your discovery?"—"My discovery is," said Carlo, "that you, none of you, know

Piedro. Look you here—look at this box, this is his measure—it has a false bottom, it holds only three quarters as much as it ought to do, and his numerous customers have all been cheated of one quarter of every measure of the admirable sugar-plums they have bought from him.—'Think twice of a good bargain,' says the proverb.'"—"So we have been finely duped indeed," cried some, looking at one another with a mortified air. "'Full of courtesy, full of craft!*'" "So this is the meaning of his burnt almonds gratis," cried others; all joined in an uproar of indignation, except one, who, as he stood behind the rest, expressed in his countenance silent surprise and sorrow.—"Is this

* Chi te fa piu carezza che non vuole,
O ingannato t'ha, o ingannar te vuole.

Piedro a relation of yours?" said Carlo, going up to this silent person; "I am sorry, if he be, that I have published his disgrace, for I would not hurt *you*; you don't sell sugar-plums as he does, I'm sure, for my little sister Rosetta has often bought from you. Can this Piedro be a friend of yours?" — "I wished to have been his friend, but I see I can't," said Francisco; "he is a neighbour of ours, and I pitied him; but since he is at his old tricks again there's an end of the matter. I have reason to be obliged to you, for I was nearly taken in; he has behaved so well for some time past, that I intended this very evening to have gone to him, and to have told him, that I was willing to do for him what he has long begged of me to do, to enter into partnership with him."— "Francisco! Francisco!—your measure;

lend us your measure!" exclaimed a number of the little merchants crowding round him. "You have a measure for sugar-plums, and we have all agreed to refer to that, and to see how much we have been cheated before we go to break Piedro's bench, and declare him bankrupt,* the punishment for all knaves." They pressed on to Francisco's board; obtained his measure, found that it held something more than a quarter above the quantity that could be contained in Piedro's. The cries of the enraged populace were now most clamorous;

* This word comes from two Italian words *Banco rotto*—broken bench.—Bankers and merchants used formerly to count their money, and write their bills of exchange upon benches in the streets—and when a merchant or banker lost his credit, and was unable to pay his debts, his bench was broken.

they hung the just and unjust measures upon high poles, and forming themselves into a formidable phalanx, they proceeded towards Piedro's well-known yellow-lettered board, exclaiming as they went along, "Common cause! common cause! the little Neapolitan merchants will have no knaves amongst them! Break his bench! Break his bench! He is a bankrupt in honesty."

Piedro saw the mob, heard the indignant clamour, and, terrified at the approach of numbers, he fled with the utmost precipitation, having scarcely time to pack up half his sugar-plums; there was a prodigious number, more than would have filled many honest measures scattered upon the ground, and trampled under foot by the crowd. Piedro's bench was broken, and the public vengeance wreaked itself also

upon his treacherous painted board. It was, after being much disfigured by various inscriptions expressive of the universal contempt for Piedro, hung up in a conspicuous part of the market-place, and the false measure was fastened like a cap upon one of its corners. Piedro could never more show his face in this market, and all hopes of friendship, all hopes of partnership with Francisco, were for ever at an end.

If rogues could calculate, they would cease to be rogues, for they would certainly discover, that it is most for their interest to be honest—setting aside the pleasure of being esteemed and beloved, of having a safe conscience, with perfect freedom from all the various embarrassments and terrors to which knaves are subject; is it not clear, that our crafty hero would have

gained rather more by a partnership with Francisco, and by a fair character, than he could possibly obtain by fraudulent dealing in comfits?

When the mob had dispersed, after satisfying themselves with executing summary justice upon Piedro's bench and board, Francisco found a carpenter's rule lying upon the ground near Piedro's broken bench, which he recollected to have seen in the hands of Carlo; he examined it carefully, and he found Carlo's name written upon it, and the name of the street where he lived; and though it was considerably out of his way, he set out immediately to restore the rule, which was a very handsome one, to its rightful owner. After a hot walk through several streets, he overtook Carlo, who had just reached the door of his own house.

Carlo was particularly obliged to him, he said, for restoring this rule to him, as it was a present from the master of a vessel, who employed his father to do carpenters' work for him. "One should not praise one's self, they say," continued Carlo; "but I long so much to give you a good opinion of me, that I must tell you the whole history of the rule you have saved—it was given to me for having measured the work, and made up the bill of a whole pleasure-boat myself. You may guess I should have been sorry enough to have lost it. Thank you for its being once more in my careless hands, and tell me, I beg, whenever I can do you any service—by the bye, I can make up for you a fruit-stall; I'll do it to-morrow, and it shall be the admiration of the market—Is there any thing else you could

think of for me?"—"Why, yes," said Francisco, "since you are so good-natured, perhaps you'd be kind enough to tell me the meaning of some of those lines and figures that I see upon your rule—I have a great curiosity to know their use."—"That I'll explain to you with pleasure, as far as I know them myself; but when I'm at a fault, my father, who is cleverer than I am, and understands trigonometry, can help us out."—"Trigonometry!" repeated Francisco, not a little alarmed at this high-sounding word; "that's what I certainly shall never understand."—"Oh never fear," replied Carlo, laughing; "I looked just as you do now, I felt just as you do now, all in a fright and a puzzle, when I first heard ofangles and sines, and vers-sines, and co sines, and arcs, and centres, and complements, and

tangents."—"Oh mercy! mercy!" interrupted Francisco, whilst Carlo laughed, with a sense, but with a benevolent sense, of superiority. "Why," said he, "you'll find all these things are nothing when you are used to them—but I cannot explain my rule to you here broiling in the sun—besides, it will not be the work of a day I promise you; but come and see us at your leisure hours, and we'll study it together—I have a great notion we shall become friends, and to begin, step in with me now," said Carlo, "and eat a little macaroni with us, I know it is ready by this time; besides, you'll see my father, and he'll show you plenty of rules and compasses, as you like such things, and then I'll go home with you in the cool of the evening, and you shall show me your melons and vines, and teach me in

time something of gardening.—Oh, I see we must be good friends, just made for each other, so come in—no ceremony."

Carlo was not mistaken in his predictions; he and Francisco became very good friends, spent all their leisure hours together, either in Carlo's workshop, or in Francisco's vineyard, and they mutually improved each other. Francisco, before he saw his friend's rule, knew but just enough of arithmetic to calculate in his head the price of the fruit which he sold in the market, but with Carlo's assistance, and with the ambition to understand the tables and figures upon the wonderful rule, he set to work in earnest, and, in due time, satisfied both himself and his master. "Who knows but these things that I am learning now may be of some use to

me before I die?" said Francisco, as he was sitting one morning with his tutor, the carpenter—"To be sure it will," said the carpenter, putting down his compasses with which he was drawing a circle—"Arithmetic is a most useful, and I was going to say necessary thing to be known by men in all stations, and a little trigonometry does no harm; in short, my maxim is, no knowledge comes amiss; for a man's head is of as much use to him, and more than his hands.

A word to the wise will always suffice.*

Besides, to say nothing of making a fortune—is not there a great pleasure in being something of a scholar, and being able to pass one's time with one's book, and one's compasses, and pencil? safe

* A buon intenditor, poche parole.

companions these for young and old; no one gets into mischief that has pleasant things to think of, and to do when alone, and I know, for my part, trigonometry is——"

Here the carpenter, just as he was going to pronounce a fresh panegyric upon his favourite trigonometry, was interrupted by the sudden entrance of his little daughter Rosetta, all in tears, a very unusual spectacle! Rosetta, take the year round, shed fewer tears than any child of her age in Naples. "Why, my dear good-humoured little Rosetta, what has happened?"—"Why these large tears?" said her brother Carlo; and he went up to her, and wiped them from her cheeks.—"And these that are going over the bridge of the nose so fast, I must stop these tears too," said Carlo. Rosetta, at this speech, burst out a laugh-

ing, and said, "that she did not know till then, that she had any bridge on her nose."—"And were these shells the cause of her tears?" said her brother, looking at a heap of shells, which she held before her in her frock.—"Yes, partly," said Rosetta, "it was partly my own fault, but not all. You know I went out to the carpenter's yard, near the arsenal, where all the children are picking up chips and sticks so busily, and I was as busy as any of them, because I wanted to fill my basket soon, and then I thought I should sell my basketful directly in the little wood-market. And as soon as I had filled my basket, and made up my faggot, which was not done, brother, till I was almost baked by the sun, for I was forced to wait by the carpenters for the bits of wood to make up my faggot, I say, when

it was all ready, and my basket full, I left it altogether in the yard."—"That was not wise to leave it," said Carlo.—"But I only left it for a few minutes, brother, and I could not think any body would be so dishonest as to take it whilst I was away. I only just ran to tell a boy, who had picked up these beautiful shells upon the sea-shore, and who wanted to sell them, that I should be glad to buy them from him, if he would only be so good as to keep them for me, for an hour or so, till I had carried my wood to market, and till I had sold it, and so had money to pay him for the shells." "Your heart was set mightily on these shells, Rosetta!"—"Yes; for I thought you and Francisco, brother, would like to have them, for your nice grotto that you are making at Resina, that was the reason I was in such a hurry to get them. The

boy who had them to sell was very good-natured; he poured them into my lap, and said I had such an honest face, he would trust me, and that as he was in a great hurry, he could not wait an hour whilst I sold my wood; but that he was sure I would pay him in the evening, and he told me that he would call here this evening for the money; but now, what shall I do, Carlo? I shall have no money to give him, I must give him back his shells, and that's a great pity."—"But how happened it that you did not sell your wood?"—"Oh, I forgot; did not I tell you that?—When I went back for my basket, do you know it was empty, quite empty, not a chip left. —Some dishonest person had carried it all off. Had not I reason to cry now, Carlo?" —"I'll go this minute into the wood-market, and see if I can find your fag-got, won't that be better than crying?"

said her brother. "Should you know any one of your pieces of wood again, if you were to see them?" "Yes, one of them, I am sure, I should know again," said Rosetta—"It had a notch at one end of it, where one of the carpenters cut it off from another piece of wood for me." "And is the piece of wood from which the carpenter cut it still to be seen?" said Francisco—"Yes, it is in the yard: but I cannot bring it to you, for it is very heavy." "We can go to it," said Francisco, "and I hope we shall recover your basketful." He and Carlo went with Rosetta immediately to the yard, near the arsenal, saw the notched piece of wood, and then proceeded to the little wood-market, and searched every heap that lay before the little factors, but no notched bit was to be found, and Rosetta de-

clared that she did not see one stick that looked at all like any of hers.—On their part, her companions eagerly untied their faggots to show them to her, and exclaimed, "that they were incapable of taking what did not belong to them;—that of all persons they should never have thought of taking any thing from the good-natured little Rosetta, who was always ready to give to others, and to help them in making up their loads."

Despairing of discovering the thief, Francisco and Carlo left the market; as they were returning home, they were met by the English servant Arthur, who asked Francisco where he had been, and where he was going. As soon as he heard of Rosetta's lost faggot, and of the bit of wood, notched at one end, of which Rosetta drew the shape with a

bit of chalk, that her brother lent her, Arthur exclaimed, "I have seen such a bit of wood as this within this quarter of an hour, but I cannot recollect where!—Stay—It was at the baker's, I think, where I went for some rolls for my master. It was lying beside his oven." To the baker's they all went as fast as possible, and they got there but just in time; the baker had in his hand the bit of wood, with which he was that instant going to feed his oven. "Stop, good Mr. baker!" cried Rosetta, who ran into the baker's shop first; and as he heard Stop! stop! re-echoed by many voices, the baker stopped, and turning to Francisco, Carlo, and Arthur, begged, with a countenance of some surprise, to know why they desired him to stop. The case was easily explained, and the baker told them, that he did not buy any

wood in the little market that morning; that this faggot he had purchased, between the hours of twelve and thirteen,* from a lad of about Francisco's height, whom he met near the yard of the arsenal. "This is my bit of wood, I am sure; I know it by this notch," said Rosetta.—"Well," said the baker, "if you will stay here a few minutes you will probably see the lad who sold it to me; he desired to be paid in bread, and my bread was not quite baked when he was here; I bid him call again in an hour, and I fancy he will be pretty punctual, for he looked desperately hungry." The baker had scarcely finished speaking, when Francisco, who was standing watching at the door, exclaimed, "Here comes

* The Italians begin their day at sun-set, and reckon the hours in an uninterrupted series from one to twenty-four.

Piedro! I hope he is not the boy who sold you the wood, Mr. baker?" "He is the boy though," replied the baker; and Piedro, who now entered the shop, started at the sight of Carlo and Francisco, whom he had never seen since the day of disgrace in the fruit-market.

"Your servant, Signor Piedro," said Carlo; "I have the honour to tell you, that this piece of wood, and all that you took out of the basket, which you found in the yard of the arsenal, belongs to my sister." "Yes, indeed," cried Rosetta.—Piedro being very certain that nobody saw him when he emptied Rosetta's basket, and imagining that he was suspected only upon the bare assertion of a child like Rosetta, who might be baffled and frightened out of her story, boldly denied the charge, and defied any one to prove him guilty.

"He has a right to be heard in his own defence," said Arthur, with the cool justice of an Englishman; and he stopped the angry Carlo's arm, who was going up to the culprit with all the Italian vehemence of oratory and gesture. Arthur went on to say something in bad Italian, about the excellence of an English trial by jury, which Carlo was too much enraged to hear, but to which Francisco paid attention; and turning to Piedro, he asked him if he was willing to be judged by twelve of his equals; "With all my heart," said Piedro, still maintaining an unmoved countenance, and they returned immediately to the little wood-market.

In their way, they had passed through the fruit-market, and crowds of those who were well acquainted with Piedro's former transactions, followed to hear the

event of the present trial. Arthur could not, especially as he spoke wretched Italian, make the eager little merchants understand the nature and advantages of an English trial by jury. They preferred their own summary mode of proceeding. Francisco, in whose integrity all had perfect confidence, was chosen with unanimous shouts for the judge, but he declined the office, and another was appointed. He was raised upon a bench, and the guilty, but insolent looking Piedro, and the ingenuous, modest Rosetta, stood before him. She made her complaint in a very artless manner, and Piedro, with ingenuity which in a better cause would have deserved admiration, spoke volubly and craftily in his own defence; but all that he could say could not alter facts. The judge compared the notched bit of wood found

at the baker's, with the piece from which it was cut, which he went to see in the yard of the arsenal.—It was found to fit exactly. The judge then found it impossible to restrain the loud indignation of all the spectators. The prisoner was sentenced never more to sell wood in that market; and the moment sentence was pronounced, Piedro was hissed and hooted out of the market-place.———Thus a third time he deprived himself of the means of earning his bread.

We shall not dwell upon all his petty methods of cheating in the trades he next attempted. He handed lemonade about in a part of Naples where he was not known; but he lost his customers by putting too much water and too little lemon into this beverage. He then took to the waters from the sulphureous

springs, and served them about to foreigners;—but one day, as he was trying to jostle a competitor from a coach door, he slipped his foot, and broke his glasses. They had been borrowed from an old woman, who hired out glasses to the boys who sold lemonade. Piedro knew, that it was the custom to pay of course for all that were broken; but this he was not inclined to do—he had a few shillings in his pocket, and thought that it would be very clever to defraud this poor woman of her right, and to spend his shillings upon what he valued much more than he did his good name—maccaroni. The shillings were soon gone.—And we shall for the present leave Piedro to his follies, and his fate, or, to speak more properly, to his follies, and their inevitable consequences.

Francisco was all this time acquiring knowledge from his new friends, without neglecting his own or his father's business. He contrived, during the course of the autumn and winter, to make himself a tolerable arithmetician. Carlo's father could draw plans in architecture neatly, and pleased with the eagerness Francisco showed to receive instruction, he willingly put a pencil and compasses into his hand, and taught him all he knew himself. Francisco had great perseverance, and, by repeated trials, he at length succeeded in copying exactly all the plans which his master lent him. His copies, in time, surpassed the originals, and Carlo exclaimed, with astonishment:—"Why, Francisco, what an astonishing *genius* you have for drawing!—Absolutely you

draw plans better than my father!"— "As to genius," said Francisco, honestly, "I have none.—All that I have done has been done by hard labour; I don't know how other people do things, but I am sure that I never have been able to get any thing done well but by patience; don't you remember, Carlo, how you, and even Rosetta, laughed at me the first time your father put a pencil into my awkward, clumsy hands." "Because," said Carlo, laughing again at the recollection, "you held your pencil so drolly: and when you were to cut it, you cut it just as if you were using a pruning knife to your vines; but now it is your turn to laugh, for you surpass us all. And the times are changed, since I set about to explain this rule of mine to you." "Aye, that rule," said Francisco, "how much I owe to it!—

Some great people, when they lose any of their fine things, cause the crier to promise a reward of so much money to whoever shall find and restore their trinket; how richly have you and your father rewarded me for returning this rule!"

Francisco's modesty and gratitude, as they were perfectly sincere, attached his friends to him most powerfully; but there was one person, who regretted our hero's frequent absences from his vineyard at Resina. Not Francisco's father, for he was well satisfied his son never neglected his business; and as to the hours spent in Naples, he had so much confidence in Francisco, that he felt not apprehensions of his getting into bad company.—When his son had once said to him, "I spend my time at such a place, and in such and such a manner," he was as well convinced of its being

so, as if he had watched and seen him every moment of the day. But it was Arthur who complained of Francisco's absence. "I see, because I am an Englishman," said he, "you don't value my friendship, and yet that is the very reason you ought to value it—no friends so good as the English,—be it spoken without offence to your Italian friend, for whom you now continually leave me to dodge up and down here in Resina, without a soul that I like to speak to, for you are the only Italian I ever liked."

"You *shall* like another, I promise you," said Francisco; "you must come with me to Carlo's, and see how I spend my evenings, then complain of me if you can." It was the utmost stretch of Arthur's complaisance to pay this visit; but in spite of his national prejudices, and habitual reserve of temper, he was

pleased with the reception he met with from the generous Carlo and the playful Rosetta. They showed him Francisco's drawings with enthusiastic eagerness; and Arthur, though no great judge of drawing, was in astonishment, and frequently repeated,—"I know a gentleman who visits my master, who would like these things.—I wish I might have them to show him." "Take them, then," said Carlo; "I wish all Naples could see them, provided they might be liked half as well as I like them."

Arthur carried off the drawings; and one day, when his master was better than usual, and when he was at leisure, eating a dessert of Francisco's grapes, he entered respectfully, with his little port-folio under his arm, and begged permission to show his master a few drawings, done by the gardener's son, whose grapes he

was eating. Though not quite so partial a judge as the enthusiastic Carlo, this gentleman was both pleased and surprised at the sight of these drawings, considering how short a time Francisco had applied himself to this art, and what slight instructions he had received. Arthur was desired to summon the young artist. Francisco's honest, open manner, joined to the proofs he had given of his abilities, and the character Arthur gave him for strict honesty, and constant kindness to his parents, interested Mr. L**, this English gentleman, much in his favour. Mr. L** was at this time in treaty with an Italian painter, whom he wished to engage to copy for him exactly some of the cornices, mouldings, tablets, and antique ornaments, which are to be seen amongst

the ruins of the ancient city of Herculaneum.*

* We must give those of our young English readers, who may not be acquainted with the ancient city of Herculaneum, some idea of it. None can be ignorant, that near Naples is the celebrated volcanic mountain of Vesuvius:—that, from time to time, there happen violent eruptions from this mountain, that is to say, flames and immense clouds of smoke issue from different openings, mouths, or *craters*, as they are called, but more especially from the summit of the mountain, which is distinguished by the name of *the* Crater. A rumbling, and afterwards a roaring noise is heard within, and prodigious quantities of stones, and minerals burnt into masses (scoriæ) are thrown out of the crater, sometimes to a great distance. The hot ashes from Mount Vesuvius have often been seen upon the roofs of the houses of Naples, from which it is six miles distant. Streams of lava run down the sides of the mountain during the time of an eruption, destroying every thing in their way, and overwhelm the houses and vineyards which are in the neighbourhood. About

1700 years ago, during the reign of the Roman emperor Titus, there happened a terrible eruption of Mount Vesuvius; and a large city called Herculaneum, which was situated at about four miles distance from the volcano, was overwhelmed by the streams of lava which poured into it, filled up the streets, and quickly covered over the tops of the houses, so that the whole was no more visible. It remained for many years buried. The lava, which covered it, became in time fit for vegetation, plants grew there, a new soil was formed, and a new town called Portici, was built over the place where Herculaneum formerly stood. The little village of Resina is also situated near the spot. About fifty years ago, in a poor man's garden at Resina, a hole in a well about thirty feet below the surface of the earth was observed: some persons had the curiosity to enter into this hole, and after creeping under ground for some time, they came to the foundations of houses. The peasants, inhabitants of the village, who had probably never heard of Herculaneum, were somewhat surprised at their discovery.* About the same time, in a pit in the town of Portici, a similar

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. ix. page 440.

passage under ground was discovered, and by orders of the king of Naples, workmen were employed to dig away the earth, and clear the passages. They found, at length, the entrance into the town, which, during the reign of Titus, was was buried under lava. It was about eighty-eight Neapolitan palms (a palm contains near nine inches) below the top of the pit. The workmen, as they cleared the passages, marked their way with chalk, when they came to any turning, lest they should lose themselves. The streets branched out in many directions, and lying across them, the workmen often found large pieces of timber, beams, and rafters; some broken in the fall, others entire. These beams and rafters are burned quite black, and look like charcoal, except those that were found in moist places, which have more the colour of rotten wood, and which are like a soft paste, into which you might run your hand. The walls of the houses slant, some one way, some another, and some are upright. Several magnificent buildings of brick, faced with marble of different colours, are partly seen, where the workmen have cleared away the earth and lava, with which they were incrusted. Columns of red and

white marble, and flights of marble steps, are seen in different places. And out of the ruins of the palaces, some very fine statues and pictures have been dug. Foreigners who visit Naples are extremely curious to see this subterraneous city, and are desirous to carry with them into their own country some proofs of their having examined this wonderful place.

THE LITTLE MERCHANTS.

CHAPTER III.

Tutte le gran facende si fanno di poca colsa.
Great things hang upon small wires.

Signor Camillo, the artist employed by Mr. L** to copy some of the antique ornaments in Herculaneum, was a liberal-minded man, perfectly free from that mean jealousy, which would repress the efforts of rising genius.—"Here is a lad of scarcely fifteen, a poor gardener's son, who, with merely the instructions he could obtain from a common carpenter, has learned to draw these plans and elevations, which you see are tolerably neat. What an advantage your instructions would be

to him," said Mr. L**, as he introduced Francisco to Signor Camillo.—"I am interested for this lad, from what I have learned of his good conduct—I hear he is strictly honest, and one of the best of sons; let us do something for him; if you will give him some knowledge of your art, I will, as far as money can recompense you for your loss of time, pay whatever you may think reasonable for his instructions." Signor Camillo made no difficulties; he was pleased with his pupil's appearance, and every day he liked him better and better. In the room where they worked together, there were some large books of drawings and plates, which Francisco saw now and then opened by his master, and which he had a great desire to look over; but when he was left in the room by himself, he

never touched them, because he had not permission. Signor Camillo, the first day he came into this room with his pupil, said to him, "Here are many valuable books and drawings, young man; I trust, from the character I have heard of you, that they will be perfectly safe here."

Some weeks after Francisco had been with the painter, they had occasion to look for the front of a temple in one of these large books.—"What! don't you know in which book to look for it, Francisco?" cried his master, with some impatience.—"Is it possible, that you have been here so long with these books, and that you cannot find the print I mean? Had you half the taste I gave you credit for, you would have singled it out from all the rest, and have it fixed in your memory." "But, signor, I

never saw it," said Francisco, respectfully, "or, perhaps, I should have preferred it." "That you never saw it, young man, is the very thing of which I complain. Is a taste for the arts to be learned, think you, by looking at the cover of a book like this?—Is it possible that you never thought of opening it?"—"Often, and often," cried Francisco, "have I longed to open it, but I thought it was forbidden me; and however great my curiosity in your absence, I have never touched them. I hoped, indeed, that the time would come, when you would have the goodness to show them to me."—"And so it is come, excellent young man," cried Camillo; "much as I love taste, I love integrity more—I am now sure of your having the one, and let me see whether you have, as I believe you have, the

other. Sit you down here beside me, and we will look over these books together."

The attention with which his young pupil examined every thing, and the pleasure he unaffectedly expressed in seeing these excellent prints, sufficiently convinced his judicious master, that it was not from the want of curiosity or taste, that he had never opened these tempting volumes. His confidence in Francisco was much increased by this circumstance, slight as it may appear. One day Signor Camillo came behind Francisco, as he was drawing with much intentness, and tapping him upon the shoulder, he said to him: "Put up your pencils, and follow me: I can depend upon your integrity, I have pledged myself for it. Bring your note-book with you, and follow me; I will this day

show you something, that will entertain you at least as much as my large book of prints.—Follow me—."

Francisco followed, till they came to the pit near the entrance of Herculaneum.—"I have obtained leave for you to accompany me," said his master, "and you know, I suppose, that this is not a permission granted to every one." Paintings of great value, besides ornaments of gold and silver, antique bracelets, rings, &c. are from time to time found amongst these ruins, and therefore it is necessary, that no person should be admitted, whose honesty cannot be depended upon." Even Francisco's talents could not have advanced him in the world, we may remark, unless they had been united to integrity. He was much delighted and astonished by the new scene that was now opened to his

view; and as he, day after day, accompanied his master to this subterraneous city, he had leisure for observation. He was employed, as soon as he had gratified his curiosity, in drawing. There are niches in the walls in several places, from which pictures have been dug, and these niches are often adorned with elegant masques, figures, and animals, which have been left by the ignorant or careless workmen, and which are going fast to destruction. Signor Camillo, who was copying these for his English employer, had a mind to try his pupil's skill; and pointing to a niche bordered with grotesque figures, he desired him to try, if he could make any hand of it. Francisco made several trials, and at last finished such an excellent copy, that his enthusiastic and generous master, with warm encomiums, carried it immediately

to his patron, and he had the pleasure to receive from Mr. L** a purse containing five guineas, as a reward and encouragement for his pupil. Francisco had no sooner received this money, than he hurried home to his father and mother's cottage. His mother, some months before this time, had taken a small dairy-farm, and her son had once heard her express a wish, that she was but rich enough to purchase a remarkably fine brindled cow, which belonged to a farmer in the neighbourhood. "Here, my dear mother," cried Francisco, pouring the guineas into her lap, "and here," continued he, emptying a bag, which contained about as much more, in small Italian coins, the profits of trade, money he had fairly earned during the two years he sold fruit amongst the little Neapolitan mer-

chants; "this is all yours, dearest mother, and I hope it will be enough to pay for the brindled cow—Nay, you must not refuse me—I have set my heart upon that cow's being milked by you this very evening; and I'll produce my best bunches of grapes, and my father, perhaps, will give us a melon, for I've had no time for melons this season, and I'll step to Naples, and invite—may I, mother?—my good friends, dear Carlo, and your favourite little Rosetta, and my old drawing-master, and my friend Arthur, and we'll sup with you at your dairy."

The happy mother thanked her son, and the father assured him that neither melon nor pine-apple should be spared, to make a supper worthy of his friends. The brindled cow was bought, and Arthur, and Carlo, and Rosetta, most

joyfully accepted their invitation. The carpenter had unluckily appointed to settle a long account that day with one of his employers, and he could not accompany his children. It was a delicious evening; they left Naples just as the sea breeze, after the heats of the day, was most refreshingly felt. The walk to Resina, the vineyard, the dairy, and most of all, the brindled cow, were praised by Carlo and Rosetta, with all the Italian superlatives which signify, "Most beautiful! Most delightful! Most charming!" whilst the English Arthur, with as warm a heart, was more temperate in his praise, declaring, that this was "the most like an English summer's evening of any he had ever felt since he came to Italy: and that, moreover, the cream was almost as good as what he had been used to

drink in Cheshire." The company, who were all pleased with each other, and with the gardener's good fruit, which he produced in great abundance, did not think of separating till late. It was a bright moon-light night, and Carlo asked his friend, if he would walk with them part of the way to Naples. —"Yes, all the way, most willingly," cried Francisco, "that I may have the pleasure of giving to your father, with my own hands, this fine bunch of grapes, that I have reserved for him out of my own share."—"Add this fine pine-apple for my share, then," said his father, "and a pleasant walk to you, my young friends."

They proceeded gaily along, and when they reached Naples, as they passed through the square, where the little merchants held their market, Francisco

pointed to the spot where he found Carlo's rule: he never missed an opportunity of showing his friends, that he did not forget their former kindness to him. "That rule," said he, "has been the cause of all my present happiness, and I thank you for ——"—"Oh, never mind thanking him now," interrupted Rosetta, "but look yonder, and tell me what all those people are about." She pointed to a groupe of men, women, and children, who were assembled under a piazza, listening, in various attitudes of attention, to a man, who was standing upon a flight of steps, speaking in a loud voice, and with much action, to the people who surrounded him. Francisco, Carlo, and Rosetta joined his audience. The moon shone full upon his countenance, which was very expressive, and which varied

frequently according to the characters of the persons whose history he was telling, and according to all the changes of their fortune. This man was one of those who are called Improvisatori—persons who, in Italian towns, go about reciting verses, or telling stories, which they are supposed to invent as they go on speaking. Some of these people speak with great oratory, and collect crowds round them in the public streets. When he sees the attention of his audience fixed, and when he comes to some very interesting part of his narrative, the dexterous improvisatore drops his hat upon the ground, and pauses till his auditors have paid their tribute to his eloquence. When he thinks the hat sufficiently full, he takes it up again, and proceeds with his story. The hat was dropped just as Francisco and

his two friends came under the piazza; the orator had finished one story, and was going to commence another.—He fixed his eyes upon Francisco, then glanced at Carlo and Rosetta, and after a moment's consideration, he began a story, which bore some resemblance to one, that our young English readers may, perhaps, know by the name of "Cornaro, or the Grateful Turk."—Francisco was deeply interested in this narrative, and when the hat was dropped, he eagerly threw in his contribution. At the end of the story, when the speaker's voice stopped, there was a momentary silence, which was broken by the orator himself, who exclaimed, as he took up the hat which lay at his feet, "My friends, here is some mistake! this is not my hat; it has been changed whilst I was taken up with my story—

Pray, gentlemen, find my hat amongst you, it was a remarkably good one, a present from a nobleman for an epigram I made. I would not lose my hat for twice its value; pray, gentlemen, it has my name written within side of it, Dominicho Improvisatore.—Pray, gentlemen, examine your hats."

Every body present examined their hats, and showed them to Dominicho, but his was not amongst them. No one had left the company; the piazza was cleared, and searched in vain. "The hat has vanished by magic," said Dominicho.—"Yes, and by the same magic a statue moves," cried Carlo,—pointing to a figure standing in a niche, which had hitherto escaped observation. The face was so much in the shade, that Carlo did not at first perceive, that the statue was

Piedro. Piedro, when he saw himself discovered, burst into a loud laugh, and throwing down Dominicho's hat, which he held in his hand behind him, cried, "A pretty set of novices! Most excellent players at hide-and-seek you would make." Whether Piedro really meant to have carried off the poor man's hat, or whether he was, as he said, merely in jest, we leave it to those who know his general character to decide. Carlo shook his head—"Still at your old tricks, Piedro," said he. "Remember the old proverb: No fox so cunning but he comes to the furrier's at last*."—"I defy the furrier and you too," replied Piedro, taking up his own ragged hat.—"I have no need to steal hats, I can afford to buy better than you'll have upon your head." Fran-

* Tutti le volpi si trovano in pellicera.

cisco a word with you, if you have done crying at the pitiful story you have been listening to so attentively."

"And what would you say to me?" said Francisco, following him a few steps.—"Do not detain me long, because my friends will wait for me." "If they are friends they can wait," said Piedro. "You need not be ashamed of being seen in my company now, I can tell you; for I am, as I always told you I should be, the richest man of the two." "Rich! You rich?" cried Francisco; "well, then, it was impossible you could mean to trick that poor man out of his good hat." "Impossible!" said Piedro. Francisco did not consider, that those who have habits of pilfering, continue to practise them often, when the property, which first tempted them to dishonesty, ceases. "Impossible!

You stare when I tell you I am rich, but the thing is so—moreover, I am well with my father at home.—I have friends in Naples, and I call myself Piedro the Lucky. Look you here," said he, producing an old gold coin; "this does not smell of fish, does it? My father is no longer a fisherman, nor I neither.—Neither do I sell sugar-plums to children: nor do I slave myself in a vineyard, like some folks; but fortune, when I least expected it, has stood my friend. I have many pieces of gold like this.—Digging in my father's garden, it was my luck to come to an old Roman vessel full of gold. I have this day agreed for a house in Naples for my father. We shall live, whilst we can afford it, like great folks, you will see; and I shall enjoy the envy that will be felt by some of my old friends, the little

Neapolitan merchants, who will change their note when they see my change of fortune. What say you to all this, Francisco the Honest?"—"That I wish you joy of your prosperity, and hope you may enjoy it long and well."—"Well! no doubt of that, every one who has it enjoys it *well*: He always dances well to whom fortune pipes."* "Yes, but no longer pipe no longer dance," replied Francisco, and here they parted; for Piedro walked away abruptly, much mortified to perceive, that his prosperity did not excite much envy, or command any additional respect from Francisco.

"I would rather," said Francisco, when he returned to Carlo and Rosetta, who waited for him under the portico, where he left them, "I would

* Assai ben balla a chi fortuna suona.

rather have such good friends as you, Carlo and Arthur, and some more I could name, and, besides that, have a clear conscience, and work honestly for my bread, than be as lucky as Piedro.—Do you know, he has found a treasure, he says, in his father's garden, a vase full of gold; he showed me one of the gold pieces."—"Much good may they do him; I hope he came honestly by them," said Carlo; "but ever since the affair of the double measure, I suspect double dealing always from him. It is not our affair, however; let him make himself happy his way, and we ours.

He that would live in peace and rest,
Must hear, and see, and say the best." *

All Piedro's neighbours did not follow this peaceable maxim; for when he

* Ode, vede, tace, se vuoi viver in pace.

and his father began to circulate the story of the treasure found in the garden, the village of Resina did not give them implicit faith. People nodded, and whispered, and shrugged their shoulders; then crossed themselves, and declared, that they would not for all the riches in Naples change places with either Piedro or his father. Regardless, or pretending to be regardless, of these suspicions, Piedro and his father persisted in their assertions. The fishing-nets were sold, and every thing in their cottage was disposed of; they left Resina, went to live at Naples, and, after a few weeks, the matter began to be almost forgotten in the village. The old gardener, Francisco's father, was one of those who endeavoured to *think the best*; and all that he said upon the subject was, that he would not exchange Francisco

the Honest, for Piedro the Lucky—That one can't judge of the day till one sees the evening as well as the morning.*

Not to leave our readers longer in suspense, we must inform them, that the peasants of Resina were right in their suspicions. Piedro had never found any treasure in his father's garden, but he came by his gold in the following manner: After he was banished from the little wood-market for stealing Rosetta's basketful of wood; after he had cheated the poor woman, who let glasses out to hire, out of the value of the glasses which he broke; and, in short, after he had entirely lost his credit with all who knew him, he roamed about the

* La vita il fine,—e'l di loda la sera.
" Compute the morn and evening of their day."
POPE.

streets of Naples, reckless of what became of him—He found the truth of the proverb, "that credit lost is like a Venice glass broken—it can't be mended again." The few shillings, which he had in his pocket, supplied him with food for a few days; at last he was glad to be employed by one of the peasants, who came to Naples to load their asses with manure out of the streets. They often follow very early in the morning, or during the night time, the track of carriages that are gone, or that are returning from the opera; and Piedro was one night at this work, when the horses of a nobleman's carriage took fright at the sudden blaze of some fireworks. The carriage was overturned near him;—a lady was taken out of it, and was hurried by her attendants into a shop, where she stayed till her car-

riage was set to rights. She was too much alarmed for the first ten minutes after her accident, to think of any thing; but, after some time, she perceived that she had lost a valuable diamond cross, which she had worn that night at the opera:—she was uncertain where she had dropped it; the shop, the carriage, the street, were searched for it in vain. Piedro saw it fall as the lady was lifted out of the carriage, seized upon it, and carried it off. Ignorant as he was of the full value of what he had stolen, he knew not how to satisfy himself as to this point, without trusting some one with the secret. After some hesitation, he determined to apply to a Jew, who, as it was whispered, was ready to buy every thing that was offered to him for sale, without making any *troublesome* inquiries. It was late; he waited till the

streets were cleared, and then knocked softly at the back-door of the Jew's house. The person who opened the door for Piedro was his own father. —Piedro started back, but his father had fast hold of him. "What brings you here?" said the father, in a low voice, a voice which expressed fear and rage mixed. "Only to ask my way, my shortest way," stammered Piedro. "No equivocations!—Tell me what brings you here at this time of night?—I *will* know."—Piedro, who felt himself in his father's grasp, and who knew that his father would certainly search him, to find out what he had brought to sell, thought it most prudent to produce the diamond cross. His father could but just see its lustre by the light of a dim lamp, which hung over their heads in the gloomy passage

in which they stood. "You would have been duped, if you had gone to sell this to the Jew; it is well it has fallen into my hands. How came you by it?" Piedro answered that he had found it in the street. "Go your ways home, then," said his father; "it is safe with me, concern yourself no more about it.'

Piedro was not inclined thus to relinquish his booty, and he now thought proper to vary in his account of the manner in which he found the cross. He now confessed, that it had dropped from the dress of a lady, whose carriage was overturned, as she was coming home from the opera; and he concluded by saying, that, if his father took his prize from him, without giving him his share of the profits, he would go directly to the shop where the lady stopped whilst her servants were raising the carriage,

and that he would give notice of his having found the cross. Piedro's father saw, that his *smart* son, though scarcely sixteen years of age, was a match for him in villany. He promised him, that he should have half of whatever the Jew would give for the diamonds, and Piedro insisted upon being present at the transaction. We do not wish to lay open to our young readers scenes of iniquity; it is sufficient to say, that the Jew, who was a man old in all the arts of villany, contrived to cheat both his associates, and obtained the diamond cross for less than half its value. The matter was managed so, that the transaction remained undiscovered; the lady, who lost the cross, after making fruitless inquiries, gave up the search, and Piedro and his father rejoiced in the success of their manœuvres. It is said, that

"Ill-gotten wealth is quickly spent,"* and so it proved in this instance; both father and son lived a riotous life, as long as their money lasted, and it did not last many months.—What his bad education began, bad company finished; and Piedro's mind was completely ruined by the associates, with whom he became connected during what he called his *prosperity*. When his money was at an end, these unprincipled friends began to look cold upon him, and at last plainly told him—"If you mean to *live with us*, you must *live as we do*." They lived by robbery.—Piedro, though familiarised to the idea of fraud, was shocked at the thought of becoming a robber by profession. How difficult it is to stop in the career of vice!

* Vien presto consumato l'ingiustamento acquistato.

Whether Piedro had power to stop, or whether he was hurried on by his associates, we shall, for the present, leave in doubt.

THE LITTLE MERCHANTS.

CHAPTER IV.

We turn with pleasure from Piedro the Cunning to Francisco the Honest. Francisco continued the happy and useful course of his life; by his unremitting perseverance, he improved himself rapidly under the instructions of his master and friend signor Camillo—his friend, we say, for the fair and open character of Francisco won, or rather earned, the friendship of this benevolent artist. The English gentleman seemed to take a pride in our hero's success and good conduct; he was

not one of those patrons, who think that they have done enough, when they have given five guineas. His servant, Arthur, always considered every generous action of his master's as his own, and was particularly pleased whenever this generosity was directed towards Francisco. As for Carlo, and the little Rosetta, they were the companions of all the pleasant walks which Francisco used to take in the cool of the evening, after he had been shut up all day at his work. And the old carpenter, delighted with the gratitude of his pupil, frequently repeated—"That he was proud to have given the first instructions to such a *genius*, and that he had always prophesied Francisco would be a *great* man."—"And a good man, papa," said Rosetta; "for though he has grown so great, and though he goes into palaces now, to say nothing of that place

under ground, where he has leave to go, yet, notwithstanding all this, he never forgets my brother Carlo and you." "That's the way to have good friends," said the carpenter.—"And I like his way; he does more than he says! Facts are masculine, and words are feminine."*

These good friends seemed to make Francisco happier than Piedro could be made by his stolen diamonds.

One morning Francisco was sent to finish a sketch of the front of an ancient temple, amongst the ruins of Herculaneum; he had just reached the pit, and the men were about to let him down with cords, in the usual manner, when his attention was caught by the shrill sound of a scolding woman's voice. He looked, and saw at some paces distant this female fury, who stood guarding

* I fatti sono maschii, le parole femine.

the windlass of a well, to which, with threatening gestures, and most voluble menaces, she forbade all access. The peasants—men, women, and children, who had come with their pitchers to draw water at this well,—were held at bay by the enraged female; not one dared to be the first to advance; whilst she grasped with one hand the handle of the windlass, and, with the other tanned muscular arm extended, governed the populace, bidding them remember, that she was padrona, or mistress of the well. They retired in hopes of finding a more gentle padrona at some other well in the neighbourhood; and the fury, when they were out of sight, divided the long black hair which hung over her face, and, turning to some of the spectators, appealed to them in a sober voice, and asked if she was not

right in what she had done?—"I, that am padrona of the well," said she, addressing herself to Francisco, who, with great attention, was contemplating her with the eye of a painter—"I, that am padrona of the well, must in times of scarcity do strict justice, and preserve for ourselves alone the water of our well—there is scarcely enough even for ourselves. I have been obliged to make my husband lengthen the ropes every day for this week past; if things go on at this rate, there will soon be not one drop of water left in my well."—"Nor in any of the wells in the neighbourhood," added one of the workmen who was standing by; and he mentioned several in which the water had lately suddenly decreased; and a miller affirmed, that his mill had stopped for want of water. Francisco was struck by these

remarks; they brought to his recollection similar facts, which he had often heard his father mention in his childhood, as having been observed previous to the last eruption of mount Vesuvius.* He had also heard from his father, in his childhood, that it is better to trust to prudence than to fortune; and, therefore, though the peasants and workmen, to whom he mentioned his fears, laughed, and said—" That as the burning mountain had been favourable to them for so many years, they would trust to it and St. Januarius one day longer;" yet Francisco immediately gave up all thoughts of spending this day amidst the ruins of Herculaneum. After having inquired sufficiently, after having seen several wells in which the water had evidently decreased, and after

* Phil. Trans. Vol. IX.

having seen the mill-wheels that were standing still for want of their usual supply, he hastened home to his father and mother, reported what he had heard and seen, and begged of them to remove, and to take what things of value they could to some distance from the dangerous spot where they now resided.—Some of the inhabitants of Resina, whom he questioned, declared that they had heard strange rumbling noises under ground; and a peasant and his son, who had been at work the preceding day in a vineyard a little above the village, related, that they had seen a sudden puff of smoke come out of the earth, close to them, and that they had, at the same time, heard a noise like the going off of a pistol*. The villagers

* These facts are mentioned in Sir William Hamilton's account of the late eruption of Mount Vesuvius.—See Phil. Trans. 1795, 1st part.

listened, with large eyes and open ears, to these relations; yet such was their habitual attachment to the spot they lived upon, or such their security in their own good fortune, that few of them would believe that there could be any necessity for removing.—" We'll see what will happen to-morrow; we shall be safe here one day longer," said they. Francisco's father and mother, more prudent than the generality of their neighbours, went to the house of a relation, at some miles distance from Vesuvius, and carried with them all their effects. In the mean time, Francisco went to the villa where his English friends resided; this villa was in a most dangerous situation, near Torre del Greco, a town that stands at the foot of Mount Vesuvius. He related all the facts that he had heard to Arthur, who,

not having been, like the inhabitants of Resina, familiarised to the idea of living in the vicinity of a burning mountain, and habituated to trust in St. Januarius, was sufficiently alarmed by Francisco's representations; he ran to his master's apartment, and communicated all that he had just heard. The count di F** and his lady, who were at this time in the house, ridiculed the fears of Arthur, and could not be prevailed upon to remove, even as far as Naples. The lady was intent upon preparations for her birth-day, which was to be celebrated in a few days, with great magnificence, at their villa; and she observed, that it would be a pity to return to town before that day, as they had every thing arranged for the festival.—The prudent Englishman had not the gallantry to appear to be convinced by

these arguments, and he left this place of danger.—He left it not too soon, for the next morning exhibited a scene—a scene which we shall not attempt to describe. We refer our young readers to the account Sir William Hamilton has published* of the last dreadful eruption of Mount Vesuvius. It is sufficient here to say, that, in the space of about five hours, the wretched inhabitants of Torre del Greco saw their town utterly destroyed by the streams of burning lava, which poured from the mountain. The villa of count di F**, with some others, which were at a little distance from the town, escaped; but they were absolutely surrounded by the lava.—The count and countess were obliged to fly from their house with the utmost precipitation in the night-time, and they had

* Philosophical Transactions.

not time to remove any of their furniture, their plate, clothes, or jewels. A few days after the eruption, the surface of the lava became so cool, that people could walk upon it, though several feet beneath the surface it was still exceedingly hot; numbers of those who had been forced from their houses, now returned to the ruins to try to save whatever they could; but these unfortunate persons frequently found their houses had been pillaged by robbers, who, in these moments of general confusion, enrich themselves with the spoils of their fellow-creatures.

"Has the count abandoned his villa? and is there no one to take care of his plate and furniture?—The house will certainly be ransacked before morning," said the old carpenter to Francisco, who was at his house giving him an ac-

count of their flight. Francisco immediately went to the count's house in Naples, to warn him of his danger.—The first person he saw was Arthur, who, with a face of terror, said to him—"Do you know what has happened? It is all over with Resina!" "All over with Resina! What, has there been a fresh eruption? Has the lava reached Resina?" "No:—but it will inevitably be blown up.—There," said Arthur, pointing to a thin figure of an Italian, who stood pale and trembling, and looking up to heaven, as he crossed himself repeatedly—"There," said Arthur, "is a man, who has left a parcel of his cursed rockets and fire-works, with I don't know how much gunpowder, in the count's house from which we have just fled; the wind blows that way; one spark of fire, and the whole is blown

up." Francisco waited not to hear more, but instantly, without explaining his intentions to any one, set out for the count's villa, and, with a bucket of water in his hand, crossed the beds of lava, with which the house was encompassed, reached the hall where the rockets and gunpowder were left, plunged them into the water, and returned with them in safety over the lava, yet warm under his feet. What was the surprise and joy of the poor fire-work maker, when he saw Francisco return from this dangerous expedition! He could scarcely believe his eyes, when he saw the rockets and the gunpowder all safe. The count, who had given up the hopes of saving his palace, was in admiration when he heard of this instance of intrepidity, which probably saved not only his villa, but the whole village of Resina, from

destruction. These fire-works had been prepared for the celebration of the countess's birth-day, and were forgotten in the hurry of the night on which the inhabitants fled from Torre del Greco.

"Brave young man!" said the count to Francisco, "I thank you, and shall not limit my gratitude to thanks.—You tell me, that there is danger of my villa's being pillaged by robbers; it is from this moment your interest as well as mine, to prevent their depredations; for a portion, trust to my liberality, of all that is saved of mine shall be yours."

"Bravo! bravissimo!" exclaimed one, who started from a recessed window in the hall where all this passed—"Bravo! bravissimo!"——Francisco thought he knew the voice and the countenance of this man, who exclaimed with so much enthusiasm; he remembered to have seen

him before, but when, or where, he could not recollect. As soon as the count left the hall, the stranger came up to Francisco—" Is it possible," said he, " that you don't know me?—It is scarcely a twelvemonth since I drew tears from your eyes."—" Tears from my eyes?" repeated Francisco smiling; " I have shed but few tears.—I have had but few misfortunes in my life." The stranger answered him by two extempore Italian lines, which conveyed nearly the same idea that has been so well expressed by an English poet:

" To each their sufferings— all are men
Condemned alike to groan,
The feeling for another's woes,
Th' unfeeling for his own."

" I know you now perfectly well," cried Francisco; " you are the Improvisatore who, one fine moon-light night

last summer, told us the story of Cornaro the Turk." "The same," said the Improvisatore—"the same, though in a better dress, which I should not have thought would have made so much difference in your eyes, though it makes all the difference between man and man in the eyes of the stupid vulgar. My genius has broken through the clouds of misfortune of late; a few happy impromptu verses I made on the count di F**'s fall from his horse attracted attention. The count patronises me—I am here now to learn the fate of an ode I have just composed for his lady's birthday; my ode was to have been set to music, and to have been performed at his villa near Torre del Greco, if these troubles had not intervened. Now that the mountain is quiet again, people will return to their senses; I expect to

be munificently rewarded. But, perhaps, I detain you. Go, I shall not forget to celebrate the heroic action you have performed this day. I still amuse myself amongst the populace in my tattered garb late in the evenings, and I shall sound your praises through Naples in a poem I mean to recite on the late eruption of Mount Vesuvius.—Adieu."

The Improvisatore was as good as his word; that evening, with more than his usual enthusiasm, he recited his verses to a great crowd of people in one of the public squares. Amongst the crowd were several, to whom the name of Francisco was well known, and by whom he was well beloved. These were his young companions, who remembered him as a fruit-seller amongst the little merchants. They rejoiced to hear his praises, and repeated the lines with shouts of ap-

plause. "Let us pass.—What is all this disturbance in the streets?" said a man, pushing his way through the crowd. A lad who held by his arm, stopped suddenly on hearing the name of Francisco, which the people were repeating with so much enthusiasm. "Ha! I have found at last a story that interests you more than that of Cornaro the Turk," cried the Improvisatore, looking in the face of the youth, who had stopped so suddenly. "You are the young man, who, last summer, had liked to have tricked me out of my new hat. Promise me you won't touch it now," said he, throwing down the hat at his feet, "or you hear not one word I have to say—not one word of the heroic action performed at the villa of the count di F**, near Torre del Greco, this morning, by signor Francisco."—"*Signor* Francisco!" re-

peated the lad, with disdain; "well, let us hear what you have to tell of him," added he.—"Your hat is very safe I promise you; I shall not touch it. —What of *signor* Francisco?" "*Signor* Francisco I may, without impropriety, call him," said the Improvisatore; "for he is likely to become rich enough to command the title from those who might not otherwise respect his merit." "Likely to become rich! how?" said the lad, whom our readers have probably before this time discovered to be Piedro.—"How, pray, is he likely to become rich enough to be a signor?" "The count di F** has promised him a liberal portion of all the fine furniture, plate, and jewels, that can be saved from his villa at Torre del Greco. Francisco is gone down thither now with some of the count's domestics, to pro-

tect the valuable goods against those villanous plunderers, who rob their fellow-creatures of what even the flames of Vesuvius would spare."—"Come, we have had enough of this stuff,' cried the man whose arm Piedro held.—"Come away,"—and he hurried forwards.

This man was one of the villains against whom the honest orator expressed such indignation. He was one of those with whom Piedro got acquainted during the time that he was living extravagantly upon the money he gained by the sale of the stolen diamond cross. That robbery was not discovered, and his *success*, as he called it, hardened him in guilt; he was both unwilling and unable to withdraw himself from the bad company with whom his ill-gotten wealth connected him. He did not

consider, that bad company leads to the gallows.* The universal confusion which followed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, was to these villains a time of rejoicing. No sooner was any wealthy house known to be forsaken by the possessors, than it was infested by these robbers. No sooner did Piedro's companion hear of the rich furniture, plate, &c. which the imprudent orator had described as belonging to the count di F**'s villa, than he longed to make himself master of the whole.—"It is a pity," said Piedro, "that the count has sent Francisco, with his servants, down to guard it." "And who is this Francisco, of whom you seem to stand in such awe?" "A boy, a young lad

* La mala compagnia è quella che men huomini a la furca.

only, of about my own age, but I know him to be sturdily honest; the servants we might corrupt; but even the old proverb of 'Angle with a silver hook,* won't hold good with him." "And if he cannot be won with fair means, he must be conquered by foul," said the desperate villain; "but if we offer him rather more than the count has already promised, for his share of the booty, of course he will consult at once his safety and his interest." "No," said Piedro, "that is not his nature; I know him from a child, and we had better think of some other house for to-night's business."—"None other; none but this," cried his companion with an oath.—"My mind is determined upon this, and you must obey your leader;—re-

* Peschar col hamo d'argento.

collect the fate of him who failed me yesterday." The person, to whom he alluded was one of the gang of robbers, who had been assassinated by his companions, for hesitating to commit some crime suggested by their leader. No tyranny is so dreadful as that which is exercised by villains over their young accomplices, who become their slaves. Piedro, who was of a cowardly nature, trembled at the threatening countenance of his captain, and promised submission. In the course of the morning inquiries were made secretly amongst the count's servants; and the two men, who were engaged to sit up at the villa that night along with Francisco, were bribed to second the views of this gang of thieves. It was agreed, that about midnight the robbers should be let into the house—that Francisco should be

tied hand and foot, whilst they carried off their booty. "He is a stubborn chap, though so young, I understand," said the captain of the robbers to his men; "but we carry poignards, and know how to use them. Piedro, you look pale—you don't require to be reminded of what I said to you, when we were alone just now?"

Piedro's voice failed; and some of his comrades observed, that he was young and new to the business. The captain, who, from being his pretended friend during his wealthy days, had of late become his tyrant, cast a stern look at Piedro, and bid him be sure to be at the old Jew's, which was the place of meeting, in the dusk of the evening: after saying this he departed. Piedro, when he was alone, tried to collect his thoughts—all his thoughts were full

of horror. "Where am I?" said he to himself; "what am I about? Did I understand rightly what he said about poignards?—Francisco; Oh! Francisco! Excellent, kind, generous Francisco! yes, I recollect your look when you held the bunch of grapes to my lips as I sat by the sea-shore deserted by all the world; and now, what friends have I? robbers and—" the word *murderers*, he could not utter; he again recollected what had been said about poignards, and the longer his mind fixed upon the words, and the look that accompanied them, the more he was shocked. He could not doubt, but that it was the serious intention of his accomplices to murder Francisco, if he should make any resistance. Piedro had at this moment no friend in the world, to whom he could apply for advice or assistance—his wretched fa-

ther died, some weeks before this time, in a fit of intoxication. Piedro walked up and down the street, scarcely capable of thinking, much less of coming to any rational resolution — the hours passed away, the shadows of the houses lengthened under his footsteps; the evening came on, and when it grew dusk, after hesitating in great agony of mind for some time, his fear of the robber's vengeance prevailed over every other feeling, and he went at the appointed hour to the place of meeting. The place of meeting was at the house of that Jew, to whom he, several months before, sold the diamond cross—that cross, which he thought himself so lucky to have stolen, and to have disposed of undetected, was, in fact, the cause of his being in his present dreadful situation. It was at the Jew's that he connected himself with

this gang of robbers, to whom he was now become an absolute slave. "O that I dared to disobey;" said he to himself with a deep sigh, as he knocked softly at the back-door of the Jew's house. The back-door opened into a narrow unfrequented street, and some small rooms at this side of the house were set apart for the reception of guests, who desired to have their business kept secret. These rooms were separated by a dark passage from the rest of the house, and numbers of people came to the shop in the front of the house, which looked into a creditable street, without knowing any thing more from the ostensible appearance of the shop, than that it was a kind of pawnbroker's, where old clothes, old iron, and all sorts of refuse goods, might be disposed of conveniently. At the moment Piedro knocked at the back

door, the front shop was full of customers; and the Jew's boy, whose office it was to attend to these signals, let Piedro in, told him that none of his comrades were yet come, and left him in a room by himself. He was pale, and trembling, and felt a cold dew spread over him—he had a leaden image of Saint Januarius tied round his neck, which, in the midst of his wickedness, he superstitiously preserved as a sort of charm; and on this he kept his eyes stupidly fixed, as he sat alone in this gloomy place. He listened, from time to time, but he heard no noise at the side of the house where he was. His accomplices did not arrive, and, in a sort of impatient terror, the attendant upon an evil conscience, he flung open the door of his cell, and groped his way through the dark passage which he

knew led to the public shop—he longed to hear some noise, and to mix with the living. The Jew, when Piedro entered the shop, was bargaining with a poor thin-looking man about some gun-powder.

"I don't deny that it has been wet," said the man; "but since it was in the bucket of water, it has been carefully dried. I tell you the simple truth—so soon after the grand eruption of Mount Vesuvius the people of Naples will not taste fire-works. My poor little rockets, and even my Catharine's-wheel will have no effect—I am glad to part with all I have in this line of business. A few days ago I had fine things in readiness for the Countess di F.'s birth-day, which was to have been celebrated at the count's villa." "Why do you fix your eyes on me, friend? What is your dis-

course to me?" said Piedro, who imagined that the man fixed his eyes upon him as he mentioned the name of the count's villa. "I did not know that I fixed my eyes upon you, I was thinking of my fire-works," said the poor man simply. "But now that I do look at you, and hear your voice, I recollect having had the pleasure of seeing you before." "When? where?" said Piedro. "A great while ago, no wonder you have forgotten me," said the man; "but I can recall the night to your recollection—you were in the street with me the night I let off that unlucky rocket, which frightened the horses, and was the cause of overturning a lady's coach. Don't you remember the circumstance?" "I have a confused recollection of some such thing," said Piedro, in great embarrassment, and he looked suspiciously

at this man, in doubt whether he was cunning and wanted to sound him, or whether he was so simple as he appeared. "You did not perhaps hear then," continued the man, "that there was a great search made, after the overturn, for a fine diamond cross, belonging to the lady in the carriage?—that lady, though I did not know it till lately, was the Countess di F." "I know nothing of the matter," interrupted Piedro, in great agitation. His confusion was so marked, that the fire-work maker could not avoid taking notice of it, and a silence of some moments ensued. The Jew, more practised in dissimulation than Piedro, endeavoured to turn the man's attention back to his rockets and his gun-powder—agreed to take the gun-powder—paid for it in haste, and was, though apparently unconcerned, eager to get rid of him. But this was not so

easily done; the man's curiosity was excited, and his suspicions of Piedro were increased every moment by all the dark changes of his countenance. Piedro, overpowered with the sense of guilt, surprised at the unexpected mention of the diamond cross, and of the Count di F.'s villa, stood like one convicted, and seemed fixed to the spot, without power of motion. "I want to look at the old cambric that you said you had—that would do for making—that you could let me have cheap, for artificial flowers," said the fire-work maker to the Jew; and as he spoke his eye from time to time looked towards Piedro. Piedro felt for the leaden image of the saint, which he wore round his neck; the string which held it cracked, and broke with the pull he gave it. This slight circumstance affected his terrified and superstitious mind more than all the

rest. He imagined, that at this moment his fate was decided; that Saint Januarius deserted him, and that he was undone. He precipitately followed the poor fire-work man the instant he left the shop, and seizing hold of his arm, whispered, "I must speak to you." "Speak then," said the man, astonished. "Not here, this way," said he, drawing him towards the dark passage; "what I have to say must not be overheard. You are going to the Count di F.'s, are not you?" "I am," said the man. He was going there to speak to the countess about some artificial flowers, but Piedro thought he was going to speak to her about the diamond cross. "You are going to give information against me? Nay, hear me, I confess that I purloined that diamond cross; but I can do the count a great

service, upon condition that he pardons me. His villa is to be attacked this night by four well-armed men; they will set out five hours hence; I am compelled, under the threat of assassination, to accompany them—but I shall do no more. I throw myself upon the count's mercy. Hasten to him—we have no time to lose." The poor man, who heard this confession, escaped from Piedro the moment he loosed his arm. With all possible expedition he ran to the count's palace in Naples, and related to him all that had been said by Piedro. Some of the count's servants, on whom he could most depend, were at a distant part of the city attending their mistress; but the English gentleman offered the services of his man Arthur. Arthur no sooner heard the business, and understood that Francisco

was in danger, than he armed himself without say ; one word, saddled his English horse, and was ready to depart before any one else had finished their exclamations and conjectures. "But we are not to set out yet, it is but four miles to Torre del Greco; the sbirri (officers of justice) are summoned— they are to go with us—we must wait for them." They waited, much against Arthur's inclination, a considerable time for these sbirri. At length they set out, and just as they reached the villa, the flash of a pistol was seen from one of the apartments in the house. The robbers were there—this pistol was snapped by their captain at poor Francisco, who had bravely asserted, that he would, as long as he had life, defend the property committed to his care. The pistol missed fire—for it was charged with

some of the damaged powder, which the Jew had bought that evening from the fire-work maker, and which he had sold as excellent immediately afterwards to his favourite customers, the robbers who met at his house. Arthur, as soon as he perceived the flash of the piece, pressed forward through all the apartments, followed by the count's servants and the officers of justice; at the appearance, the sudden appearance, of so many armed men, the robbers stood dismayed. Arthur eagerly shook Francisco's hand, congratulating him upon his safety, and did not perceive, till he had given him several rough friendly shakes, that his arm was wounded, and that he was pale with the loss of blood. "It is not much, only a slight wound," said Francisco; "one that I should have escaped, if I had been upon my guard; but the sight of a face I

little expected to see in such company took from me all presence of mind; and one of the ruffians stabbed me here in the arm, whilst I stood in stupid astonishment."

"Oh! take me to prison! take me to prison—I am weary of life—I am a wretch not fit to live!" cried Piedro, holding his hands to be tied by the sbirri.

He was taken to prison the next morning; and as he passed through the streets of Naples he was met by several of those who had known him when he was a child. "Aye," said they, as he went by, "his father encouraged him in cheating when he was *but a child;* and see what he's come to now he is a man!" He was ordered to remain twelve months in solitary confinement.

His captain and his accomplices were sent to the galleys, and the Jew was banished from Naples. And now, having gotten these villains out of our way, let us return to honest Francisco. His wound was soon healed. Arthur was no bad surgeon, for he let his patient get well as fast as he pleased; and Carlo and Rosetta nursed him with so much kindness, that he was almost sorry to find himself perfectly recovered. "Now that you are able to go out," said Francisco's father to him, "you must come and look at my new house, my dear son." "Your new house, father?" "Yes, son, and a charming one it is, and a handsome piece of land near it—all at a safe distance too from Mount Vesuvius; and can you guess how I came by it?—it was given to me for having a

good son," "Yes," cried Carlo, "the inhabitants of Resina, and several who had property near Torre del Greco, and whose houses and lives were saved by your intrepidity in carrying the materials for the fire-works and the gunpowder out of this dangerous place, went in a body to the duke, and requested that he would mention your name and these facts to the king, who, amongst the grants he has made to the sufferers by the late eruption of Mount Vesuvius, has been pleased to say, that he gives this house and garden to your father, because you have saved the property and lives of many of his subjects."

The value of a handsome portion of the furniture, plate, &c. in the Count di F.'s villa, was, according to the Count's promise, given to him; and

this money he divided between his own family and that of the good carpenter, who first put a pencil into his hands. Arthur would not accept of any present from him. To Mr. L——, the English gentleman, he offered one of his own drawings—a fruit piece. "I like this very well," said Arthur, as he examined the drawing, "but I should like this melon better if it was a little bruised. It is now three years ago since I was going to buy that bruised melon from you; you showed me your honest nature then, though you were but a boy, and I have found you the same ever since.—A good beginning makes a good ending—an honest boy will make an honest man, and honesty is the best policy, as you have proved to all who wanted the proof, I hope." Yes," added

Francisco's father, "I think it is pretty plain, that Piedro the cunning has not managed quite so well as Francisco the honest."

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

Printed by S. Hamilton, Weybridge, Surrey.